

# WIRE

THE JAZZ AND NEW MUSIC MAGAZINE

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DOUBLE ISSUE

Face o,

DAVE O'HIGGINS

'89

RECORDS

of

THE YEAR

RONALD SHANNON JACKSON

ALBERT AYLER

MANFRED EICHER

SONIC YOUTH

TIM BERNE

JAZZ AWARDS

# ANTILLES & MANGO: FOR YOUR DELECTATION...



## DAGMAR KRAUSE:

Tank Battles,

The Songs Of Hanns Eisler

Dagmar Krause is the finest contemporary interpreter of the German song tradition. For the past five years she has been researching an ambitious project, an album devoted to the songs of Hanns Eisler.

Eisler was a German composer whose music was at the forefront of the political and cultural struggle against Nazism. Forced into exile with the rise of Hitler in 1933, Eisler became a leading literary writer in Hollywood before falling victim to the McCarthy witch-hunts of the late-Forties.

Degmar has restored Eisler's music and reputation to their rightful place in the culture of our times. Tank Battles is no museum曲, Degmar has enlisted the help of American producer/arranger Greg Cohen (from Tom Waits' band) to realize a fresh update of Eisler's songs, without diluting the fire and passion of the original music.

Antilles CD (ANCD 8739), Album (AN 8739), Cassette (ANC 8729)

## YOMO TORO: Funky Jibaro

In Puerto Rico they call it plena

It's the folk music from the island's hill country, a bouncy, driving string band dance music. And number one among Puerto Rico's great plena artists is Yomo Toro. Yomo is an undisputed virtuoso of the cuatro, the 10-string violin-guitar that gives plena its distinctive sound. In the late-Sixties Yomo was a charter member of the legendary salsa group, the Fania All-Stars.

Now comes Funky Jibaro, Yomo's first album for Antilles

Antilles CD (ANCD 8723), Album (AN 8723), Cassette (ANC 8723)



## CHABA ZAHOUANIA: Nights Without Sleeping

Morocco-born Chaba Zahouania is the mystery woman of Rai, the popular music of Algeria. Coming from a strict Muslim fundamentalist background, her family have prohibited public performances and all photographic

Despite this, however, Zahouania is currently one of the major stars of Rai. Nights Without Sleeping, Zahouania's debut for the Mango label, confirms her burgeoning reputation, a brilliant exploration of pure Rai.

Mango CD (CID 9914), Album (JPS 9914), Cassette (JCT 9914)



## CHABA FADELA: You Are Mine

Chaba Faedela is one of the great voices of Rai, the popular music of Algeria. Her music is the result of a long evolution coming from Oran and the surrounding cities in the west of Algeria. Faedela has adopted these traditions to the concerns of the country's youth – some 75 per cent of Algeria's population Chaba (the feminine of 'young' in Arabic). Faedela is the single most important female Rai singer, with a reputation that now stretches far beyond the confines of western Algeria.

Seize the taste of Rai on You Are Mine, Chaba Faedela's debut album for the Mango label.

Mango CD (CID 9915), Album (JPS 9915), Cassette (JCT 9915)

ANTILLES  
NEW DIRECTIONS



*Mr**David**O'Higgins**in the**living**color**of**Nick**White.**Hair**and**make-up**by**Cheryl**Richards*

## WIRE MAGAZINE

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"I can definitely say that music won't stop. It will continue to go forward." CHARLIE PARKER, 1953.

## WIRE MAGAZINE

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an editor's idea

Welcome to this year's double number — the biggest-ever

Wire, and the first in our final drive towards the 90s

These are exhilarating times for the music. Now that most notions of a jazz "revival" have been laid to rest, a firmer and more serious footing is being established in the media, with record companies and in the live context. It seems that every month we are reporting on new venues and fresh initiatives. Most won't last, but those that do will be the stronger for it.

Elsewhere in this issue, Manfred Eicher asks, where is the resistance? The dilemma of welcoming a rash of new musics lies in — if you'll pardon a marketing term — quality control. Newness is no substitute for substance. For fresh music, there must be fresh criteria. The homogeneity of a world music view, where anything can be mixed with anything else, will be as damaging as any stifling individual categories. It's something we'll go on talking about in these pages. One antidote Albert Ayler (see elsewhere in this issue).

Of course, this kind of thing gets us called "intellectual" and "elitist". It's happened before. We can live with that. R D C

GRAHAM LOCK



LUCY WARD

RICHARD COOK

TERRI LEIBER

We wish you a peaceful Christmas and New Year

WIRE MAGAZINE



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THE NEW WAVE IN JAPANESE TECHNOLOGY



SANYO

**ROVA'S RETURN**

**T**HREE ROVA saxophone quartet plus pianist Keith Tippett's trio, and the John Surman/Jack DeJohnette duo will undertake the first two Contemporary Music Network jazz tours of 1989. Reedsman Surman and drummer DeJohnette will also be playing various synthesisers and sequencers on their hi-tech tour which begins in London's Queen Elizabeth Hall on 24 January and then visits Brighton Gardner Arts Centre (25); Poole Arts Centre (26); Manchester Royal Northern College (27); Leeds Trades Club (28); Bristol Old Vic (29); Crawley The Hawth (30); Sheffield Octagon Centre (31); Warwick Arts Centre (1 February); Nottingham Albert Hall (3); Birmingham Adrian Boult Hall (4); Cheltenham Everyman (5); Southampton venue tbc (7).

The West Coast-based Rova (Jon Raskin, Larry Ochs, Andrew Voight, Bruce Ackley), whose new LP with Anthony Braxton, *The Aggregate*, has just been released by the German sound asperts label, share a bill with West-countryman Tippett and his trio (Marcio Mattos, Roberto Bellatella) in London's Purcell Room (16 February) and then at Brighton Gardner Arts Centre (18); Bristol Old Vic (19); Sheffield Leadmill (21); Llanwit Major St Donat's Art Centre (23); Leeds Trades Club (25); Birmingham Adrian Boult Hall (26).

Full details on both tours from the CMN, 01-629 9495.

**MIAMI SPICE**

**L**AURIE Anderson, Marilyn Crispell, Bill Frisell, Steve Lacy and Roscoe Mitchell are among the major artists appearing at the

New Music America festival to be held this year in Miami from 2-11 December. The festival, dedicated to the memory of composer Morton Feldman, spans the range of contemporary music, will feature the work of over 100 composers and includes 25 world and 25 US premieres. Among the premieres are John Cage's *Five Stone*, Anthony Davis's *Violin Concerto*, Gerry Hemingway's *Music For Solo Percussion* and Steve Lacy's *Rasles* – the latter a cycle of ten songs taken from modern Russian poems and performed by Lacy, Irene Aebi and Frederic Rzewski.

Laurie Anderson will be presenting her *Difficult Music* video, while Crispell, Frisell and Mitchell will all be giving solo concerts of improvised music. Other performers scheduled to appear include James Blood Ulmer, Sonic Youth, Michele Rosewoman, the Kronos Quartet, the Charles Austin/Joe Gallivan duo and the New World Symphony Orchestra; while composers whose work will be represented include Thelonious Monk, John Zorn, Asror Piazzolla, Steve Reich, Charles Wuorinen and Lou Harrison. Further details from 010 1 305 347 3768.

**THE SPIRIT OF BETHNAL GREEN LIBRARY LIVES!**

**I**N THE PAST improviser Derek Bailey is to restart his legendary series of Saturday afternoon concerts in January. The concerts, which previously put Bethnal Green Library on the world music map, will be held this time around at the Ossian Wine Bar, 113 Lower Clapton Road, London E5; they are due to happen weekly and will all begin at 3 pm. Artists appear-

ing have yet to be confirmed, although the format will be as before, with Bailey performing in duo each week with a special guest, and it is likely that the first concert, on 7 January, will feature violinist Phil Wachsmann.

Bailey and Wachsmann can also be heard on a special Company concert to be broadcast in Radio Three's *Music In Our Time* series at 10 pm on Thursday 29 December. Other players at the concert, which was recorded a few months ago, include Cyro Baptista, Alex Ward, Mick Beck and Gavin Bryars.

**AFTER EIGHTIES**

**C**O MPOSERS Olivier Messiaen and Elliott Carter both celebrate their 80th birthdays in December, and there are several London concerts to mark the occasion(s). A South Bank Messiaen season, from 1-22 December, will include the first complete British performance of *Catalogus D'Orionis* (4 December); a concert by Pierre Boulez's Ensemble InterContemporain (11); and the UK premiere of the five-act visionary drama *St Framous D'Assie*, which will be performed in the composer's presence on his birthday (10).

Elliott Carter's 80th birthday is honoured with two South Bank concerts on 12 and 13 December. The first, at the RHF, again features the Ensemble InterContemporain and will include the first British performance of Carter's *Oboe Concerto*; the second, at the Purcell Room, has the Arditti Quartet performing Carter's first three string quartets. Further information on all these concerts from 01-928 3002.

Pierre Boulez will also conduct

several of his own compositions in a major retrospective of his work at the Barbican Centre from 15-19 January. The retrospective is part of the venue's "Images De France" festival, as is the Xenakis/UPIC project (14-29 January) in which Greek composer Iannis Xenakis will explain and explore electronic and computer musics in a series of free lectures, demonstrations and workshops. Full details from 01-638 4141.

**MELLOW BELLOW**

**A COMPILATION LP** *Mellow Mayhem* and Pinski Zoo's "Sweet Automatic" 12" single are the first two releases from Jazz Cafe Records, a new label launched by Stoke Newington's Jazz Cafe proprietor Jon Dabner. The LP, recorded live at the Cafe, has tracks by the Ed Jones Quartet, Andy Sheppard and Keith Tippett, Mervyn Africa, the Dave O'Higgins Quartet, the Phil Bent Band and the Claude Deppe Trio.

Pinski Zoo's "Sweet Automatic" is a re-recorded version of the track on their *Rare Breds* LP, as is the flipside "New Lunacy". Expect both records in your local vinyl emporium by early December.

**ON TOUR: BISCOE, TRACEY**

**R**EEDSMAN Chris Biscoe takes his quartet on a New Year tour just as pianist/composer Sean Tracey completes his quartet's tenth anniversary tour with a series of December dates. Biscoe, best-known for his work with Mike Westbrook, leads Peter Jacobsen (keyboards), Mick Huron (bass) and Dave Barry (drums) to Colchester Arts Centre (12 January);



*Fiddler on the roof:* PHILL WACHSMANN keeps company with Derek Bailey, live and on radio

Cheltenham Queens Hotel (13, tbc); Cambridge Flambards (20); Nottingham Old Vic (23); Aldershot West End Centre (27); Darlington Arts Centre (1 February, tbc); Manchester Band On The Wall (2); Burnley Mechanics (3); Stamford Arts Centre (4); Brentwood Hermit Club (5). Further details from 01-549 4465 or 0789 298289.

Stan Tracey's quartet — Art Themen (reeds), Roy Babington (bass), Clark Tracey (drums) — visit Tornes Dartington Hall (8 December); Yeovil The Bell Inn (9); Exeter Arts Centre (10); Brentwood Monkey Club (11); Duss The Corn Hall (17). Details of the Stan Tracey Orchestra's CMN tour in March will appear in the next issue of *WIRE*.

#### A BRUM DO

NANA VASCONCELOS and Zila are among the artists booked for "Sound Choice", a Birmingham jazz festival planned for 15–19 March 1989. The line-up confirmed to date is the Andy Hamilton Quartet (15 March); the Stan Tracey Orchestra (16); Zila (17); Nana Vasconcelos (18); and Svengali (19). It is also hoped that a series of jazz-related films will be shown during the festival. Further details from 021-632 4921.

#### IRON CURTAIN RAISERS

THE BRIT-Magyar Quintet, comprising three Hungarian and two British musicians, will be touring the UK in the New Year. The musicians — George Haslam (baritone sax), Steve Franklin (piano), Gyula Cserega (reeds), Pál Vaszai (bass), Vilmos Jávor

(drums) — first played together in Budapest in 1987, although an earlier version of the group (of which Haslam is the only survivor) toured England in 1982. '89 tour dates are Colchester Arts Centre (26 January); Cambridge Flambards (27); Maidstone Hazlitt Theatre (29); Oxford Jericho Tavern (30); Mold Theatre Clwyd (31); Nottingham Old Vic (1 February); Norwich Arts Centre (2); London Royal Festival Hall (3); York Arts Centre (4, tbc); London Jazz Café (5); Cardiff Four Bars Inn (6); Bracknell Wilde Theatre (7). Further details from 0235 29012.

#### PER HENRIK WALLEN

SAD NEWS reaches us via Lars Westin of our distinguished Swedish contemporary *On Jazz*. The pianist Per Henrik Wallen was recently involved in an accident which has left him paralysed from the waist down. Though he can still use his arms, he finds it

too painful to sit at a keyboard for more than 20 minutes or so. Nevertheless, he is itching to get back to playing and is having a keyboard adapted. We send best wishes to Per Henrik and suggest everyone invests in his beautiful solo album *Moon Over Calcutta* (Dragon DRLP 143).

#### AWARD THE SQUADDETTE

THE NATIONAL Federation of Music Societies is offering a Special Award for Young Musicians, which is designed to encourage young players from "jazz and non-Western backgrounds". The award comprises a concert at London's Purcell Room in April 1989, ten more concerts at venues around the country, a cash prize of £300 and assistance with publicity. There is also a runners-up prize of £100 and help with publicity. The award is open to soloists, duos and trios of instrumentalists; and applicants should be over 17 and

under 30 years of age on 31 December 1988, and intending to make their careers as fully professional performers based in Britain. Auditions will be held from 7–10 February 1989. Application forms are available from Helen Ranger, Special Award Administrator, JR Management, 5 Summerfield Road, Ealing, London W5 1ND, and must be returned to her by 10 December 1988.

#### WAITING FOR BECKETT

TRUMPETER Harry Beckett and saxophonist Alan Barnes take their groups on two new Jazz Services tours this winter. The Barnes quartet — with David Newton (piano), Dave Cliff (guitar), Paul Morgan (bass) and Mark Taylor (drums) — visit London Purcell Room (6 December); Newcastle Corner House (11); Cardiff Four Bars Inn (12); Croydon Fairfield Halls (13); Aldershot West End Centre (16); Darlington Arts Centre (17); Derby The Dial (18).

In the New Year, Barbadian Beckett, long a stalwart of the London jazz scene, takes his quartet of Chris McGregor (piano), Fred "Thelonious" Baker (bass), and Tony Marsh (drums) to Newcastle Corner House (17 January); Preston Guildhall (18); Manchester Band On The Wall (19); Liverpool Bluecoat Arts Centre (20); London Bloomsbury Theatre (21); Derby The Dial (22); Cardiff Four Bars Inn (23); Sheffield Leadmill (24); Aberystwyth Arts Centre (25); Bristol Arnolfini (26); Gloucester Guildhall Arts Centre (27); Warminster Arts Centre (28); Marrock The Bell Inn (29). Further details on both tours from Jazz Services, 01-240 2430.



COURTNEY MCPINE (bass, vox)

**S**TUNG, PERHAPS, by last month's "new age subsidiary" description in these pages, the Virgin Venture label look set to aim for much harder ground next year. A deal has been done with Bill Laswell's label Nation to release a stack of records which are sure to have George Winston fans clapping their hands over their ears. These include a Laswell/Vernon Reid/Shannon Jackson set, a duo album by Nicky Skopelitis and Ginger Baker, an Anton Fier solo record and a session by Japanese sax screamer Akira Sakata. "Let somebody try and call that new age," quipped label boss Declan Coghlan. Expect all records early in the new year . . . Hats off, though, to corporate daredevils Nonesuch for their amazing strike in a recent issue of *Billboard*. In the midst of a gushing 13-page supplement on the new age industry, Nonesuch took out a full-page ad with the simple tagline "A thought about new age music. From Nonesuch Records." The ad consisted of the following simple message on a plain white background. "YOU SPEND A THIRD OF YOUR LIFE ASLEEP, ISN'T THAT ENOUGH?" . . . We also learn from *Billboard* (since we weren't invited ourselves) that the Jazztimes Convention in Los Angeles did lots of talking, as usual. A lot of grumbling seemed to centre on the lack of a strong black audience for jazz. Most pertinent comment seems to have emanated from RIAA executive Jim Fishel: "It doesn't seem like the jazz community can get their act together" . . . Speaking of getting it together, we had a bumpy time ourselves on a recent trip to Paris. The occasion was the international launch of RCA's Novus label, with press hacks flown in from around the world to attend and interview Novus types like Steve Lacy, Amina Myers and Hilton Ruiz. Unfortunately, a transport strike in the city meant problems from the start. The busload of Brit crits first found themselves stranded at the airport, then went to the wrong hotel, then missed the musicians; finally got to the gig and heard a bizarre mixture of sets, with drummer Oliver Johnson being the only common

denominator in all of them. Next day, they all had to struggle home again. It's tough at the typewriter. But at least you can read our exclusive interview with Henry Threadgill next issue . . . And at least we got as far as France. We hear that wild man of European drums Tony Oxley was recently refused a US work visa on the basis that he "wasn't important enough". Good grief! Tony Oxley not important? If it weren't for that lad, free drumming would be up t'spout . . . Medical report, though rumoured to be visiting here at the end of November, Miles Davis has reportedly been laid up with pneumonia for some time. We wish him well . . . Bill Frisell and band have signed to Nonesuch, who are obviously not asleep . . . Is Courtney Pine getting a bit desperate for media attention? First we hear that the man from Paddington has been filming for a new series of *The Ghosts Of Faffier Hall*, a Muppets spin-off where CP plays a travelling sax salesman. Then he turns up on *Halfway To Paradise*, dressed in kilt and sporran, as a tribute to Tiny Grimes and his Rockin' Highlanders. What's next? Courtney on *Farmhouse Kitchen*? . . .

A few problems for Leo label boss Leo "Leonardo" Feigin. After printing up hundreds of copies of the insert leaflet to go with his forthcoming and mightily magnificent Anthony Braxton box set, he discovered that his designer had changed the all-important colours used to denote the tune titles for others that he considered "more beautiful". Do it again! On top of that, the pressing plant handling the discs burned down! Leo battles on regardless and is bringing the free world this superb session even as we speak . . . And finally—again—this time it's the real congrats to Chris and Janet Parker on the birth of their son. Fighting off all jazz temptations, the Parkers decided not to name him Charlie, William, Errol, Leo, Evan, or Roosevelt. His name is Andrew. And that's one for all you David Ackles fans . . . Cool yule, everyone . . .

THE BIG CAT

Photo by KEN MELLIN

**EVERYBODY SHOULD OWN A COPY OF THIS.**



**NOBODY SHOULD OWN A COPY OF THIS.**



**SONY.**

w b e r e

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<b>ABERYSTWYTH</b> Am.		<b>LEWIS RILEY QRT</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>PARTY WITH</b>	<b>TRIO</b>	<b>Jan 17</b>	<b>ROYAL FESTIVAL</b>
<i>Centre</i>		<i>SPIRIT LEVEL</i>	<b>17</b>	<i>HORNWEB, PAUL</i>	<b>MERVYN AFRICA QRT</b>		<b>HALL</b> <i>Foyer</i>
<b>LOOSE TUBES</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>LANCASTER</b> <i>Splash</i>		<b>REID, FTC</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>Jan 18</b>	<b>IN A NUTSHELL</b> <b>Jan 13</b>
<b>BIRMINGHAM</b> <i>Mallord</i>		<i>MOSH</i>		<b>SKELMERSDALE</b>		<b>JAN 19</b>	<b>PONYT BIRDS</b> <b>Jan 18</b>
<i>Art Centre</i>		<b>DUDU PUWKANA QRT</b>	<b>10</b>	<i>Lobby</i>		<b>STAN TRACEY, ALAN</b>	<b>SALVADORS</b>
<b>DON ELLIS CONNECTION</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>LIVERPOOL</b> <i>Blossom</i>		<b>SUPERSAK II</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>JAN 22</b>	<b>MARTIN SPEAKE, TED</b>
<b>BLACKBURN</b> <i>King</i>		<b>DUDU PUWKANA QRT</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>SOUTHPORT</b> <i>Theatre</i>		<b>BATTERSEA</b> <i>Art Centre</i>	<b>DEMMIT QRT</b> <b>4</b>
<i>Greggs Hall</i>		<b>MAIDSTONE</b> <i>Jazz Centre</i>		<b>LOOSE TUBES</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>JAZZ DTECTIVES</b>	<b>COLIN SALMON QRT</b> <b>11</b>
<b>SUPERSAK II</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>ELEPHANT</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>DUDU PUWKANA QRT</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>HOUNSLAW</b> <i>Contrejour</i>	<b>SUE SHATTOCK,</b>
<b>BRACKNELL</b> <i>Stab Hall Park</i>		<b>MANCHESTER</b> <i>Band On The Wall</i>		<b>SWINDON</b> <i>Link Centre</i>		<b>TERRY DISLEY</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>IN CAHOOTS</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>DUDU PUWKANA QRT</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>BUILIT</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>EL DORADO</b>	<b>JAN 8</b>
<b>BRIGHTON</b> <i>Concourse</i>		<b>SUPERSAK II</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>London</b>		<b>TINA MAY QRT</b>	<b>JAN 15</b>
<b>MORRISFY-MULLEN</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>NORWICH</b> <i>Art Centre</i>		<b>BARBICAN</b> <i>Foyer</i>		<b>SUN</b>	
<b>Jean TOUSSAINT</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>SPIRIT LEVEL</b>	<b>Jan 20</b>	<i>discharged</i>		<b>MARTIN SPEAKE QRT</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>BRISTOL</b> <i>Armenia</i>		<i>St. Gregory's</i>		<b>UNIT 5</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>LOU GALE TRIO</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>THINKO JAZZ</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>HANK QUINLAN QRT</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>TOMMY WHITTLE</b>		<b>GIGO</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>BULLIT</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>NOTTINGHAM</b> <i>Old Vic</i>				<b>HOWARD RILEY</b>	<b>1, 10</b>
<b>BURNLEY</b> <i>Parishion Town Hall</i>		<b>POINTY BIRDS</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>QRT</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>SUE SHATTOCK,</b>	<b>LOL COXHILL</b>
<b>SUPERSAK II</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>IAN FRASER QNT</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>ROLAND LALY QNT,</b>		<b>TERRY DISLEY</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>BURY</b> <i>Mere Am.</i>		<b>TERRY HUTCHINS,</b>		<b>ROGER BURN QNT</b>		<b>STEVE BERRY</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>DUDU PUWKANA QRT</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>TONY KILKENNY QRT</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>WITH ART THEMEN</b>		<b>MARTIN SPEAKE,</b>	
<b>CAMBRIDGE</b> <i>Planchard</i>		<b>DICK MORRISFY QRT</b>	<b>21</b>			<b>MICK HUTTON</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>ED JONES</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>MIKE MANCHEP QRT</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>IAN BALLANTINE TRIO</b>	<b>Jan 15</b>	<b>VERVY WESTON,</b>	
<b>IN CAHOOTS</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Strangle About</b>				<b>TREVON WATTS</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>STAN SULTZMAN QRT</b>		<b>UP, DOWN AND</b>		<b>BASS CLEF</b>	<b>Jan 22</b>	<b>LOL COXHILL, DAVE</b>	
	<b>Jan 13</b>	<b>STRANGE</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>QNT</b>		<b>GREEN</b>	<b>16</b>
-95*		<b>MIKE WEBBFR</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>BOBBY WATSON QRT</b>	<b>4-8</b>	<b>STEVE BERRY, MARK</b>	
<b>DUDU PUWKANA QRT</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>POOLE</b> <i>Art Centre</i>		<b>ROLAND PERRIN TRIO</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>LOCKHEART</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>CARDIFF</b> <i>Fair Barn Inn</i>		<i>TONY LEE TRIO WITH</i>		<b>CLARK TRACEY QRT</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>JULIAN ARGUELLES</b>	
<b>MOMENTUM</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>PETE KING</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>NORMA WINSTONE</b>		<b>MARTIN SPEAKE,</b>	
<b>JAZZUKI</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>SHEFFIELD</b> <i>Hallamian</i>		<b>SUE SHATTOCK,</b>		<b>STEVE ARGUELLES</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>DYLAN FOWLER'S</b>		<b>SNAPPER</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>TERRY DISLEY</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>PLACE THEATRE</b>	<b>WATERMANS</b>
<b>PREVO</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>HORNWEB</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>POINTY BIRDS</b>	<b>13-16</b>		
<b>GLEN MANBY QRT</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>CLANG</b>	<b>Jan 12</b>	<b>JAMI-TALBOT QRT</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>STEVE BERRY</b>	
<b>CHAMELEON</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>WESTERN DEVILS</b>	<b>Jan 19</b>	<b>DUDU PUWKANA'S</b>		<b>WATERMANS</b>	
<b>Bob TUNNICLIFFE</b>		<b>ROGER TURNER QRT</b>		<b>QUEEN</b>		<b>MARKIN SPEAKE QRT</b>	
<b>QRT</b>	<b>18</b>			<b>ELIZABETH</b>			
<b>SAXOLOGY</b>	<b>19</b>			<b>HALL</b>			
<b>EDINBURGH</b> <i>Queer Hall</i>		<b>PETE KING QRT</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>LINDYHOPPERS</b>	<b>28, 30</b>	<b>WAYNE BACHELOR</b>	<b>6, 22</b>
<b>JAN GARBAREK</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>CAREY BELL</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>MANGESDORF (TRC)</b>	<b>Jan 1, 2</b>	<b>TRIO</b>	<b>8, 29</b>
<b>GLOUCESTER</b> <i>Grindell</i>		<b>MADE IN SHEFIELD</b>		<b>DIAMANDA GALAS</b>		<b>TOMMY SMITH QRT</b>	<b>16</b>
				<b>ROADESIDE PICNIC.</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>BEAUJOLAIS &amp; PERRIN</b>	



MARTIN ARCHER *unseen a Hornweb in Sheffield and Stoke Newington*  
Photo by DAVID BOCKING

## Bird Lies?



Val Wilmer casts

a doubting eye

on the good,

the bad and

the ugly distortions of Charlie Parker's life.

THE HISTORY of jazz music has been plagued by simplistic stereotypes, formulated in the main to avoid dealing with the reality of Black creativity. There's Jelly Roll, the pimp, with his diamond-studded incisor, Louis "mugging" his way through half a century as if he had not a thought in his head. To these we can now add Charlie Parker, the buffoon, courtesy of the tradition that just loves to see Blackfolks sit and suffer. For genius, if it is Black, must be seen to be flawed — over and over again.

Should these words seem harsh, look outside the mainstream view. *Bird*, the movie, has received near-unanimous praise from American critics. Any dissent has centred around the blurring of historical fact. Among Bird's peers and their spiritual descendants, however, it's been a quite different story; the groundswell of anger in the Black intellectual community at the shabby portrayal of such a key figure is intense.

When I first saw it some months ago, I had gone along awed at the prospect of seeing Parker's life on the screen, pessimistic that anything remotely authentic could come out of Hollywood. In some ways I was pleasantly surprised — so there had been Black people on the streets of New York in the 40s and 50s after all, inter-racial relationships could be shown as normal, not deviant — and I acknowledged director Clint Eastwood's integrity in making a film that could not have been a popular box-office choice. But the question of narcotics-abuse and self-destructiveness stayed in my mind. Did we really need another film about a Black man who lost out to junk? But then, where Parker's life was concerned, how could this stress be avoided?

Two months in the United States reinforced my doubts. Down in Mississippi young Black people were still boycotting schools, the hushed-up lynching that was rumoured in California two years ago had indeed taken place, the credibility of Black

testimony was in question throughout the courts. The advances of the 60s were being eroded once more. Afro-America did not need another hero presented this way.

Removed from the realities of the world that created a Charlie Parker, it is hardly surprising that anyone inspired by his music should react to *Bird* with enthusiasm. But on a second viewing I was forced to conclude that, fascinating as it is to see that music up there on the screen, the movie acts against it and the people who make it by offering a belittling characterisation of one of its geniuses. It matters not how much integrity Eastwood employed, how well Chan and Red Rodney schooled the actors in the portrayal of their personal relationships. The positive side of Bird's character is woefully absent, and that has far-reaching consequences as to how this music continues to be evaluated and regarded.

No explanation is offered of Parker's early heroin use and continuing dependence, suggestive as it is to mainstream thinking of a deranged personality rather than one survival route a Black man might find himself taking. 52nd Street is portrayed in its heyday, peopled by a glamorous multi-racial cast, but even this presentation is idealised, with no indication that the street was almost as forbidden to most Blacks then as the Cotton Club had been in the 20s. What did it mean to a man like Parker to have to create music under such conditions, dependent on white patronage for his Cabaret Card and survival? And although he may have chosen white women for love, an underlying element of patronage existed there, too.

It seems incredible that we see nothing of the saxophonist's relationships with his mother and the other women who shared his life: Rebecca, his teenage wife and mother of his firstborn, Doris, with whom his contemporaries recall him spending more time than Chan, his companion of his later, more disturbed years. Pianist/bandleader Jay McShann, who claims Bird was "a better player in Kansas City" than after he took him to New York, gets not a look in. Had he done so, we might have had more understanding of how the saxophonist's music developed rather than being left with the false impression that genius just comes out of nowhere.

Many have questioned why Miles and Max were not involved. Received wisdom is that they were approached for their endorsement not their ideas, so refused. And so we are privy to none of the musical and political debate that must have often consumed Parker and his peers at this revolutionary moment in history. When we do get a snippet of conversation between Bird and Diz, the hammy script makes a mockery of the question of racial uplift which occupied Black people challenging their situation during and after World War Two, one of the cornerstones on which bebop was built.

Bird's music has, literally, transfigured lives. By offering no real indication of its overwhelming significance, by never suggesting for a moment why it was so revolutionary and influential, but above all, by dwelling on the negative aspects of Parker's character, this movie does not make it any easier to understand or remember what the fight of artists like him was all about.



## After nearly 200 years, the clarinet Mozart wrote his clarinet concerto for.

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## NEW FUSION

by Paul Gilroy

**A**LL THIS "Acid Jazz" malarkey is getting a bit out of hand. It has certainly moved far beyond the joke that its originators once claimed it to be. No one can blame them for their increasingly desperate attempts to hustle up a living as DJs in London's clubland but it is necessary to ask what price the music is going to have to pay for their scurrilous rewriting of its history. The exclusive identification of this modish jazz marketability with the same narrow and parochial strand of the music in which the creators of the great "Acid Jazz Scam" have a direct financial stake is neither innocent nor wholesome.

These issues came to the boil in my mind while listening to some recycled FUNK INCORPORATED tracks recently issued by BGP under the outrageous title "Acid Inc". The praise which has been heaped on these basically dull tunes sums up the emperor's-new-clothes syndrome which lies at the heart of this whole miserable cult. It's not simply that I've never been a fan of Funk Inc but that their whimsical, lightweight music seems of a piece with the variety of nostalgia which keeps the "Acid Jazz" bandwagon rolling.

Whatever else "Acid Jazz" might be, it's not a simple synonym for jazz-funk or fusion. Its would-be contemporary practitioners all trade in a style that is emphatically pre-Headhunters. When authentic contemporary fusion does come along you can bet your boots it'll be too damn funky for the Acid palate. One record the Acid heads definitely won't be raving over is the new album from WISHERFUL THINKING. The band has found a new home on the digital Soundwings label and their third set *Way Down West* is their deepest yet. Ex-Tower of Power drummer David Garibaldi demonstrates that he still knows how to funkifise and both guitarist Tim Weston and vibist Dave Shank have their moments. Both of them contribute appropriately cerebral solos to the quintet's assertive, clever funk.

*Take For Example This* (Windham Hill Jazz) is the first solo set from pianist BILLY CHILDSD and it's another excellent fusion outing that won't be picking up any extra endorsements from the smiley brigade. Produced by Billy and panman Andy Narell, the album is split 50/50 between introspective post-bop and tough-minded funk burners. The Funk Rhythm section is Jimmy "Flim" Johnson on bass and drummer Steve Houghton while Tony Dumas and Mike Baker handle the

acoustic material with flair and finesse.

DAVE VALENTIN's first live outing *At The Blue Note* (GRP) is notable not simply for his own contribution but for the all-round excellence of his band. The pianist Bill O'Connell is simply outstanding and drummer Robert Ameen anchors the proceedings by moving sweetly between Latin and funk idioms. Their version of "Footprints" is not to be missed.



## THE SOUND OF AFRICA

by Mark Stinker

THERE ARE arguments still to be had with the World Music Service Industry. Can't be denied, though, that the flow of music is now so strong and varied that choosing a chart becomes decidedly eccentric, deliciously subjective, and just plain difficult. Some brief reasons, then, how records have been bumped up on to the African LPs of the year list (see p 55), what the numbers mean, what might have been missed:

(1) starts with a scroll of kora from the expert fingers of Mory Kante, but the full mournful kick recalls more Kante Manfila's association with Salif Keita than all those solo kora sets (I'm meanly suspicious of the roots-fan's love affair with kora pure — they can't *all* tell one player from another, surely?), or the easy retreat Mory Kante's made as a Eurobeat pop phenomenon (where the club mix mixed the kora out altogether). Complex, subtle, a use-transformation of a tradition, like Keita's *Soro*. And also not like it.

(2 & 3): girls on top. Stella and Nahawa are part of a modern Africa (one from the South, one from the North), independent women in a profession that has tended to frown on such.

There's a chilling force here more spiritual than physical, as a result.

(4) is an almost perfectly presented but otherwise self-explanatory compilation. (5) I dealt with at length last month.

(6) Wickedly louche Rai's been the sensation this year. Oardia's also Algerian, but Berber, and the solemn, grainy passion of her voice is altogether a more stately pleasure. Our love of sleazy electro-speed should not let us overlook it.

(7) 1988's been so rich in releases that as important a return to international attention as Mahlathini and the Queen's *Thokozile* ends up down here, between *Asirew* and *Sabel*, sets it has nothing in common with. That's down to purely personal (hard-to-justify) taste. Fifteen first equals would have been a cop-out, I think you'll agree.

And (8–10) are simply fine pan-African records from various scattered individuals. Voices and/or arrangements have stood out, perhaps, without being anything I'd immediately put into a larger significance (unlike 1, 2, 3, 5, and 7 . . .).

Keeping up with the music has been hard enough this year without hunting down (expensive) product all the way from Africa itself. I'm fairly defiantly unembarrassed about this, even if it means my attitudes are filtered through a variety of European market choices (though that means Ghanaian music has lost out – and also Nigerian, more surprisingly).



## ANCESTRAL VOICES

by Brian Morton

GOOD, PROFESSIONAL recordings of innovative modern repertoire are still shamefully scant. Composers have to wait until works are so well established in the performing canon for an LP or CD to be confidently marketed; alternatively, they have to rely on groups of enthusiasts or appreciation societies raising sufficient cash by subscription to meet the often unanticipated costs of a recording. The circle completes itself, for it is still records that are the prime means of musical communication in our society and if people are not hearing good modern music recorded, they are less likely to

demand innovative concert programming.

It's particularly good, then, to welcome a new label specifically dedicated to recording neglected or marginal work. Albany Records (UK) is the cisatlantic branch of an 18-month-old parent company. In addition to distributing American releases, it will follow its own recording policy.

First fruit is a stirring new performance of Cornish composer GEORGE LLOYD's Fourth Symphony (AR002 CD/LP/MC), written in 1945 in recollection of his experiences on the Arctic Convoy. Lloyd, who conducts, inscribed the title page "... a world of darkness, storms, strange colours and a far away peacefulness" and that very accurately catches the impact of a piece, only now being recognised as important, in which "the music, the sea, an orchestra, my own anguish, all become mixed up together".

Lloyd's "anguish" undermined his health and between 1951 – a good year for commissions all round – and 1973 he was little more than a part-time composer. Fortunately, the decade and a half since has been kinder and Lloyd's catalogue is now fuller and livelier.

Albany have responded to a new interest in his work in America (and hope to awaken it here) by releasing a series of six Lloyd recordings, next up is a set of piano pieces, including *The African Shrine*, performed by Martin Roscoe (AR003 – release December) and, later, a choral piece, the unperformed *Pervigilium Veneris*, which is billed to round off the series (two symphonies, two piano concerti) by the end of next year. Future plans include work by WALTER PISTON and ROY HARRIS, also ROBERT WARO's Saxophone Concerto (all January). The following month sees the release of a set of four BACH recordings by the – experts say brilliant – pianist Rosalyn Tureck. There is also a series of ten reissues from the innovative Louisville Symphony Orchestra, itself long dedicated to new repertoire.

The Albany SO, who give the Lloyd such a powerful reading, are worthy successors who have four times won awards for "adventurous programming". Behind this lies the encyclopaedic enthusiasm (and the mucho dollars) of their patron Peter Kermani, an Iranian-American dealer in carpets and hi-fi equipment, who annually despatches two employees over the Atlantic for a painstaking trawl through the National Sound Archive for new and interesting pieces for next year's concerts. Only in America . . .

(Albany Records, PO Box 12, Carnforth, Lancashire LA5 9PD)

## A JACKSON IN YOUR HOUSE

Lone-star sticksman Ronald Shannon Jackson – the percussive power behind Albert

Ayler, Cecil Taylor, Ornette Coleman, Power Tools and Last Exit – plays rough with

Mark Sinker. Photo: Gino Sprio

"At that time, in what I call the Squat Theatre era, a lot of things were happening. And the main things were the whole *Defunkt* *Contortions* thing, and what Ron was doing. Because Ron was the only one that was playing – I mean, Blood was playing, so I shouldn't say that, Blood as well, but musically. I listen to records now and I hear things that we were doing then that no one heard because we were playing in clubs and stuff. And in a certain way, *Power Tools* is a clarification of what was happening back with that music." (Melvin Gibbs, Decoding Society, *Defunkt*, *Power Tools*, *Noir Are Us*, Black Rock Coalition etc.)

1981, says Mr Gibbs, was the year, in New York City. The year the No Wave Underground went Bang: "Everyone was way out then. Whatever happened to Ron it happened to him that year." You can locate Shannon Jackson this way, if you want – say he came out of a scene, helped start it, epitomises what it escaped it, etc.

But as with his approach to the placement of the beat, something about him is always earlier/later than you first thought. In one time, all times: because, after all, he's changed the way we hear drums, even though we're only half-aware of that as yet. And has so damaged and extended fusion's strange legacy that we can't even be sure exactly what we feel about it any more.

Fort Worth/Connecticut/New York/Africa – and back home, thanks to Fort Worth's Caravan Of Dreams, to Texas. Kenny Dorham, Jackie McLean, McCoy Tyner, Albert Ayler, Charles Mingus, Betty Carter, Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor, and finally round into finding himself, the most significant drummer/composer of the last 20 years. Whatever happened to Ronald Shannon Jackson – on the way to the Decoding Society, Last Exit, SXL and Power Tools – happened somewhere on that long loop.

When he walked past a drum, and knew it was going to be part of his life to come, he was just four. Loops don't have beginnings. Two weeks after he first arrived in New York, he landed a gig with Charles Tyler through another Fort Worth worthy, Charles Moffett, and after the session, "this fellow with the strange beard who I hadn't noticed" came up and asked him to play: Albert Ayler. After which things happened to him. Or else they didn't:

"When Albert was living, he was going to do the cover interview of *downbeat*, he asked me to come for the interview, but

I was so stoned out of my mind the night before that I was stoned for another couple of days, so I didn't even get up to go to the meeting. So that's why I say, it's my karma, because I missed being on the cover and being in the news. He had to go and find his brother, and he took his brother to the interview."

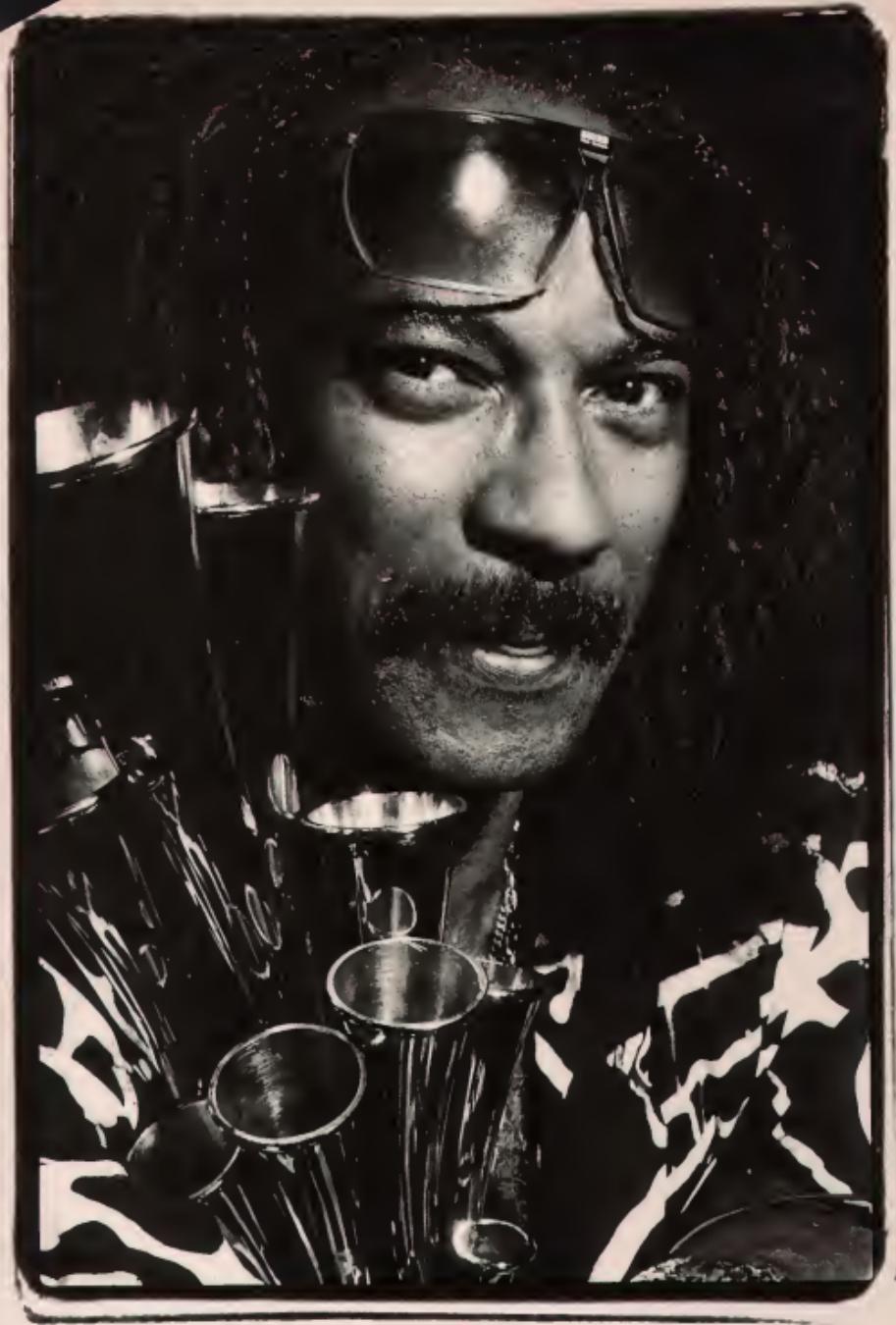
After Albert's death, though, a period of frustration. He gave up music, worked as a Market Statistician for North Division United Aircraft: till he found himself doodling drums in the office and looking forward to going-home time, and six hours' practice every evening. So goodbye to his two secretaries and his wallet full of credit cards for a life of sleeping rough, scrounging for food. Until he ran into Ornette, with Bern Nix, in a restaurant, looking for a second drummer for Prime Time. Ornette, coming on him playing round the kit one day, lingering on the rhythm-melodies, advised him to take up the flute to help him compose.

Some time round the same time he met Cecil Taylor in the Village Vanguard, a club he hadn't entered for maybe ten years (they had, he says, an attitude with people who'd played with Ayler): "I was going down the street – and my mind was saying, Get something to eat, you're hungry. But my first mind was saying, Go into the Vanguard. So by this time, Buddhism had trained me to listen to my first mind – and I went into the Vanguard in spite of myself. I don't know who was playing, I wasn't interested. I went into the kitchen.

Cecil Taylor was standing back there drinking a bottle of champagne. He asked me what I do. I said I play drums. He said, Can you play? And I said, I'm the best at what I play, because no one else plays the way I play. He said, Give me your number, and the next day he called me. That's the way it's been. I didn't plan these things."

THE FIRST Decoding Society records make a sense now that we couldn't find before – time and later projects have given us pause, and we've found precision delicacies layered into their screaming pummelled surface. *Street Priest* is a template, some say, for everything Last Exit have done. *Mandance* and *Barbecue Dog* flex a sarcastic urbanjungle primitivism – "Alice In The Congo" – that yokes impossible opposites (Mingus/Zepplin, Taylor/Ayler, times/space).

But ever since he exorcised his frustrations with bebop in that piously malevolent run-through of (head-tune only) Dizzy's "Bebop", and ended for ever the need not to play what he was



Ronald Shannon Jackson

feeling and hearing with the solo LP *Pulse*, the colours and tones have deepened, folding back into each other. The long, slow sighs of ancient melody and the busy electric crackle of inner voicings turned clashing titans to subtle interplay.

So when he woke up one morning in an old colonial beach-hotel in Benin, formerly Dahomey, after travelling through eight African nation-states, to write "March Of The Pink Wallflowers" for *When Colors Play*, he was finalising more than just an oldworld/newworld marriage.

"I went to Africa. I received two grants that allowed me to go. And I took two flutes and two professional Sony Walkman tape-recorders, a camera, some underwear, and a couple of pairs of jeans. And I went to listen. Mainly. To listen. I learnt more by listening than anything else. And what I really came away with was a verification of what I was already doing."

"My original intention in the place that I found was a secret drum society that I'd heard about. And I got there and I found several others. But once you start playing rhythm, on your own, once you develop a rhythm or a set pattern of rhythm that you live with, which I do, then there's virtually nothing that you can't come up with on your own. And going to Africa was a verification of what I'd already heard . . ."

*Deude Yourself, When Colors Play and Texas* are a remarkable trio of records just because as he's entrenching for one more journey through the territory he's staked out for himself, he makes it triply clear how vast this private world is now, encompassing bodies, continents, home. Once things happened to him. Now things reach our through him.

He's taken to describing his structures as "dynamethmic" (a word as usefully private-language and inscrutable as Harmolodics is for Ornette): either way, the actual power of the portmanteau is a specific unstable separation rather than some easily labelled this/that fusion of extremes, a split-level polybabble rather than a bland mélange.

THE BUGGED difficulty of Shannon Jackson's rhythms gives his music its complex turning moment, this persistently separated double-time: poised or frozen fragments of primeval motion, *savant-garde* wit expressed in molten animal wails, hugely static sungod drums driven into an insane froth of inner shivering — in this ambiguous space, he forces people to find themselves.

"I have to go through a whole training period trying to erase people's preconceptions of their instrument. I wanna be like so-and-so, someone they heard. I teach all the people I work with the point that they can be themselves. Just like the person they admire is doing what they're doing."

"What I teach them to do is to play the way they knew they could play when they got the instrument, before they realised they had to use a whole lot of technique and technicality. People who play instruments, they know how to play already — it's the other things they have to learn to appease, that work within an organised framework of society."

"In other words, schools teach a certain thing, that anyone can

look up all over the world, these notes, these many bars, this key, is the same if you put it all over the world on a fax or a telex machine, it's the same thing in any part of the world. That's necessary. But musicians know their instruments, and they know the sound, and what they're hearing. That's the reason they want to hear it."

"And when they hear someone playing the instrument that's theirs also to play, they naturally gravitate towards wanting to be like that. Because that person has perfected that. And what they need to realise is that they can do that on their own and say, That's that way, here's the other way."

Now, then, always (the loop again): not timeless (nothing is), but vehemently timely. After Coltrane, jazz had been in crisis, a rhythmic gap between soul and schooling, Europe and Africa, the Free and the Social. If Laswell had produced Miles on *Big Fun* or *Ajibarba* or even *On The Corner*, who of us would have left the theatre in tears? If Ayler had asked Iggy & The Stooges in on to the *New Grass* session, would James Chance have been necessary?

Last Exit finally allowed Sharrock and Brötzmann to close that historic wound. (After Hendrix, Black Rock had been in similar crisis. Power Tools, the Hendrix Trio backwards and in negative, have rediscovered the energies in that lost tension.)

"Last Exit is a vehicle for me to play totally, to hear and to play. Power Tools shows a melodic aspect of my rhythmic sense, of what I'm trying to develop and perfect. It's an excellent vehicle because it's a trio, and I don't think I played in a trio since I used to play bebop."

"Playing with Frisell — who has a spacious sense — allows rhythmic ideas I'm already working on to work. Playing with Last Exit allows me to play with the energy and the expression that the drums are capable of."

"The drums are a rough instrument, not a sensitive background instrument. People make it that, but it's not so. People use them to talk with over long distances, miles. It's not a background while someone's sipping a Martini and trying to get some pussy . . ."

PERHAPS IT'S because he's more force than object that he never seems to resemble himself from photo to photo. Shannon Jackson is the link between the stored information in the tradition, with all its elaborate nuance, and the primally violent, undifferentiated roar of the new, the early/late meeting point — after Ayler, like Blood — between the old-world craft-empires of Taylor and Coleman and the as-yet-uncoded fire of players like Frisell, Reid, Gibbs.

"It's difficult to be passive in this music. That's all of what we've been talking about."

And it's not about striking a balance?

"If people want to strike a balance they should listen to Kenny G. Most of them do. That's good. It's simple. But life ain't always gonna be simple."

*Texas*, the new LP by Ronald Shannon Jackson, is available now on *Caravan Of Dreams*.

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## Steve Reich And Musicians

LONDON  
SOUTH BANK

COMING TO terms with and embracing minimalism seems, for most of the listening public, to have been a surprisingly rapid and painless process. Michael Tilson Thomas has told of the violently mixed reception given to an early performance of Steve Reich's *Fair Organs* — an occasion which he did not hesitate to compare to the Paris premiere of *The Rite Of Spring*. Yet the Queen Elizabeth Hall audience sat through this piece in a spirit of docile acceptance, and the kind of ovations that greeted Reich and bow-tied ranks of the London Symphony Orchestra during this ten-day retrospective of his works would have seemed unthinkable 20 years ago, when his music was confined to tiny New York concert halls and the odd broadcast in the small hours on Radio Three.

The current state of Reich's instrumental writing was unveiled in this series with the UK premiere of *The Four Seasons*, a large-scale orchestral work commissioned by the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra and here performed by the LSO. It focuses, in turn, on the four sections of the orchestra — strings, woodwinds, brass and percussion — beginning with a long slow movement in which the strings rise and fall in elaborate, languorous counterpoint. Vibraphones and pianos interrupt this mood with angular rhythmic patterns which then give way to spitting trios of oboes and clarinets — a

gorgeous effect which testifies to Reich's increasingly inventive sense of orchestral colour. The climax is loud, complex and exciting. While it didn't quite answer the question of whether minimalism can continue to embrace large instrumental forces and still remain distinctive, *The Four Seasons* certainly held the attention: more so than the other UK orchestral premiere, *Three Movements*, which relied heavily on adaptation of material from the *Sextet*.

Reich's evident musical purism has never involved insulating himself from either the image or the word. One of his earliest compositions was for an underground film called *Plastic Haze*, and throughout his career he has experimented, not always successfully, with various methods of setting words to music. The low point (for me, anyway) was *The Desert Music* in 1984: here Tilson Thomas and the LSO gave it an immaculate performance, but their very polish seemed to highlight — and add to — its defects. Reich has attempted to capture the speech rhythms inherent in William Carlos Williams' verse by using flexible changing metres, which is all very well, but the texture and intonation of the voices (in this case the BBC Singers) remain light years away from anything Williams suggests on the page. By contrast *Tehillim*, on the same programme, sounded all the more fresh and uplifting.

In any case, this problem was put into an entirely new light by the final concert, which gave us the world premiere of *Different Trains*, for string quartet and tape, performed by the Kronos Quartet. Musically it involves up to four string quartets playing at once: so in this respect it recalls the series of counterpoint pieces which are among Reich's most captivating recent composi-

tions. (The latest, a commission for Pat Metheny called *Electra Counterpoint*, was also premiered at these concerts: for rhythmic and melodic invention it's the most stunning so far, and, like *Different Trains*, it will be released on Elektra/Nonesuch next year.)

More importantly, though, *Different Trains* seeks a radically new way of putting speech into a musical context. Reich has written that the idea for the piece came from his childhood. When his parents separated, he used to travel back and forth by train between New York and Los Angeles to visit them, accompanied by his governess: "While these trips were exciting and romantic at the time, I now look back and think that, as a Jew, if I had been in Europe during this period I would have had to ride very different trains. With this in mind, I wanted to make a piece that would accurately reflect the whole situation."

What Reich did was to recast the reminiscences of his governess, a retired Pullman porter, and three Holocaust survivors; take small speech samples from these recordings that were "more or less clearly pitched", and then notate them musically. The quartet plays phrases based on these speech extracts, thereby allowing *quid* (for the first time in any of Reich's works since the early tape pieces) to dictate form. The music is therefore very irregular rhythmically, since different phrases sometimes trigger abrupt changes of mood. "Into those cattle wagons" (spoken by one of the Holocaust survivors) provokes a frantic and strident passage, "and the war was over", which begins the third movement, signals a return to calmer, more lyrical patterns.

This is a sharp turnaround for Reich — granting complete authority to the voices on the tape, instead of trying to force

speech rhythms into the straightjacket of an unwieldy structure, as in *The Desert Music*. The result is a triumph: *Different Trains* is far and away his most emotional piece, and it also represents the most human use of sampling technology that I have ever come across.

Whether it will lead to "a new kind of documentary music video theatre in the not too distant future" (as Reich has, with uncharacteristic boldness, predicted) remains to be seen. Meanwhile we should be grateful that while Glass dabbles in science fiction and John Adams tries to make a hero out of Nixon, both in over-inflated forms, Steve Reich continues to work on a saner scale, producing music with an ever-higher level of both personal and political commitment.

JONATHAN COE

## Jazz Warriors

LONDON  
QUEEN ELIZABETH HALL

THE FIRST major tour by the Warriors kicked off at the QEII, trailed by a Radio Three presentation of some of the material the previous evening (which nobody taped for study purposes, did they?)

Underwritten by the Arts Council Contemporary Music Network, the motif is "Homage To Joe Harriott", the remarkable alto player who died in 1971 at the age of 44.

In the late 1950s, when I first lived in London, my wife and I were often invited to Joe's flat, round the back of the QPR ground, and he to ours. Joe had an enormous intellectual appetite — a lot of which he later squandered on an unending battle of wits with fruit machines — he loved to argue and could be scurrilously witty about his contemporaries. There was something very fast



MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS *conductor San Francisco Symphony*

*Photo by ANDREW POTHECARY*

about Joe: the way his hand worked, the way his notes were made, his angular physical movement; so it was rather ironic to be confronted at the start of the concert by a three-part tribute, written by Herman Wilson, which was elegantly voiced and beyond doubt heart-felt, but which was eternally slow and solemn.

That over, the Warriors go into an altogether looser stride. The rest of the material was written by either Harry Beckert — who must feel as though he's inherited the whole earth as elder statesman to an outfit like this — and Fayaz Varji. Because they both work in the band, their charts generate a context which simultaneously sets a tone for the band and allows plenty of leg-room for the reeling free-spirits in which it abounds.

This leads to a few surprises: it might be expected that Courtney makes the most of that space, even though he doesn't get — or seem to expect — more than anyone else. But then here comes, for instance, the young and unheralded Brian Edwards, has one solo a model of clean Parkerish elegance (and Joe would have loved that); then Claude Dauppa, who spends most of his time levering himself further back into his chair to give the brass its high edge, suddenly blowing solo like a bebop Rex Stewart.

This is somewhere near the key to the band: though their ethos seems to demand a certain commonality of status there are few restrictions on the individual view. This leads to a slight imprecision at times, but the clean lines of pure competence seem not to be high on the agenda. Thank God, they're after something more elusive, where strength of purpose and conviviality of spirit combine to convince you that you're in the presence of a great performing orchestra,

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like Dizzy's was in the late 1940s and Ra's was in the early 1970s.

When the Warriors really start to hit this begins to happen, that ice-warmer-down-the-spine feeling develops and you realise that, whatever your pretensions, you're still a fan at heart. When you leave the gig, you're smiling at everybody and the world seems temporarily a better place. That's the sort of thing Joe Harriott was after, all his life.

JACK COOKE

## Schoenberg's *Moses Und Aron*

LONDON  
ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL

If *Moses Und Aron* is less well-known than it deserves, the reasons are threefold: it is a daunting work, the ten-minute egg of the hard-boiled serialists' school; it requires Schoenberg's usual hefty forces (a huge choir in this case); and it is unfinished — Moses's cry "Ob word, thou word that I lack," the last words of the opera, have suggested to some that it was unfinishable.

Schoenberg never got beyond Act II, though he continued to work on it, and the libretto for the final act and Aron's death was actually written. What he once referred to as the "exact notion of the whole thing" was certainly available to him. He made his libretto from *Exodus* and *Numbers*, concentrating on the obvious dramatic crises: the Burning Bush, the Golden Calf and the Tablets of the Law.

It is none the less an oddly alien and (in Brecht's sense)

alienating work. Of the two principals, Moses is a non-singing part, delivered in an awestruck *Sprechgesang*. It's clear that the two brothers represent divided aspects of Schoenberg's own self, his own alienation and, later, exile. It is Aron (= Arnold?) who is able to turn the promise and the futility of law into song — he is the first to turn the tone-row into melody — and Philip Langridge sang the part every bit as magnificently as he did on Sir Georg Solti's 1985 recording.

The choral effects — Schoenberg's special genius — are immensely beautiful and the opening encounter with the Burning Bush is one of the essential first scenes in modern opera. If audiences have balked at the opera, perhaps it is because *Moses Und Aron* must be the largest work to derive strictly from the 12-tone technique, at the expense (as conservatives would have it) of the late-Romantic emotionalism of Schoenberg's earlier *Gurrelieder* (climax, on 28 and 29 January, to the South Bank's ambitious Schoenberg cycle "The Reluctant Revolutionary").

It's a pity that *Moses Und Aron* should have kicked off the series. Without the broader context the series should provide, its impact was seriously blunted and it's regrettable that such an able concert production — by the BBC Symphony Orchestra under Sir John Pritchard — can't be repeated later in the cycle. Beginners to Schoenberg may well have felt easier with the lush string version of *Verklärte Nacht* (a revision of the 1899 sextet) given on the second night by the Berlin Philharmonic under Herbert von Karajan.

The series as a whole features some typically imaginative programming, an attempt to locate Schoenberg squarely in

his time (though rather more among his immediate predecessors than his progeny). In particular, there's an unmissable combination at the QEII (17 January), the Brahms G minor piano quintet and Schoenberg's haunting *Pierrot Lunaire*.

BRIAN MORTON

## Festival International Music Actuelle

CANADA  
VICTORIAVILLE

FOR FIVE days in October, a tiny French Canadian town was seized and transformed into Music City, sonic capital of North America. This year, Victoriaville honed a music-lover's desert-island dream: 27 full-length concerts programmed so as to illuminate, profile and juxtapose. And nothing else to do, save eating the regional delicacy: french fries. Careful balance in terms of geography, genre and visibility provided an international slice of *actual* music with a healthy respect for grass roots.

In fact, those deserving wider recognition made for some of the festival's highlights. Anne LeBaron worked from the centre of three harps, a loomstress interweaving orient, occident and accident with emphasis on the tense relations between thematic and textual material. Les Graines, Rene Lussier (guitar) and Jean Derome (keyboards, reeds), played a disarming set of songs that shamelessly resorted to vaudeville slapstick. Aki Takase and Maria Joao resuscitated the lie-dreams of casino soul with a lounge act perched deliciously on the fence between satire and sensuality. Portuguese vocalist Joao ached her way through a burning, oddly-angled "Lush Life": goose-flesh everywhere.



*Honour is JOE HARRIOTT. The 1963 quartet. L-R Pat Saybie, Joe Harriott, Shake Keane, Bobby Orr, Coleridge Goods. Photo VAL WILMER*

In her solo piano slot, Takase derailed the complex change-train of "Giant Steps" with elbow slams and a mechanical boogie-woogie that conjured Nancarrow.

In the "new jazz" arena, French clarinetist Louis Sclavis's drum-tight quartet snaked Braxtonian lines in and out of ample free space, showing astonishing range and versatility. In one piece, Sclavis transmuted an Irish theme into a funk-bop-stomp, through an electronically treated bass-clarinet solo and home again, jiggity-jig.

Anthony Braxton's promising ensemble — a septet with Gerry Hemingway, George Lewis, Joelle Leandre, Paul Smoker, Bobby Naughton and Evan Parker — had mixed results. Although there were some very bright moments, including a buoyant trio of Lewis, Hemingway and Smoker (who shone throughout), the composition seemed more dis-

tracting than inspirational. In particular, "special guest" Parker was virtually dormant, plodding through the charts without time to suggest or develop an independent idea.

In solo, duo and trio improvisations with fellow reedsman Bill Smith and Wolfgang Fuchs, Parker had no such trouble. Together they meticulously unpacked the first trio, Smith sandwiched between Fuchs' acidic, halting soprano and Parker's python tenor. Two duets matched Smith to the unbelievable Parker soprano-onslaught and Fuchs' soprano. Each player soloed wonderfully. Parker started with an enormously exciting vennue into his ongoing series of harmonic soprano safaris. Smith then provided a poignant, lyrical soprano solo. Finally, Fuchs demonstrated in a bass-clarinet solo that he is a major new figure, having developed a personal vocabulary of slur, shriek, sputter and

tonal material, all at the employ of his impressive formal powers. This was a festival peak; rumour is that it may see vinyl. Let's hope so.

Another high-point was reached when trumpeter Leo Smith, pianist Fred van Hove and drummer Siba Toyozumi squared-off for a visceral bout of free jazz. Dynamics rose and fell regularly for some time until van Hove donned accoutrements and wheezed a short, lovely duet with Smith. Thereafter the pace quickened and Toyozumi broke thunder only to slip in a snippet of rock backbeat.

Terry Riley's contribution was far less substantial. Used to be that Riley's music was banal in an obsessive, challenging way. Here, a duet between Riley (piano, voice) and George Brooks (reeds) was banal in a facile, dopey way, prime for elevators and supermarkets everywhere. Such shallow appropriation of "ethnic"

musics almost convinces that in the New Age the glib shall inherit the earth.

Speaking of which, John Zorn's Naked City band. For Zorn, it seems, the glib is delib. No time to say goodbye, hello — late for a very important date with the next genre. This jump-cut technique produced thrills and chills much the way an eclectic record collector's "Stars On 45" might. But the tactic never changed, and is provided for such unfortunate misuse of player-potential as when Fred Frith was "featured" on the bass-motif from "Goldfinger". A Beach Boys medley, familiar film scores, several of Zorn's new hardcore pieces, cheesy jazz; fun for a bit, but it seems to me that in this context he's a fantastic saxophonist treading water.

Zorn proved his improvisational prowess the night before in duets with Frith. His riveting tendency, his full mastery



AKI TAKASE, *armed piano* at Victoria's

Photo MARK MILLER

of the patented downtown-  
NYC overtones, and his  
tremendous interactive skills  
were on full display. It is here,  
not in any tribute or montage  
setting, that Zorn really  
moves. Frith was a perfect  
match. Sparring, undercutting,  
supporting, leading,  
marching shrill-for-shrill, he  
provided rhythmic invention  
and noisy surprise with his  
usual expertise.

JOHN CORBETT

## Naked City Kronos Quartet

LONDON  
ROYALTY THEATRE

FOR CLASSICAL ensembles the question of repertoire is crucial. Much praised for their willingness to commission new works, Kronos also bear responsibility for the composers they pick. Judging by tonight's batch they favour snug new-age retreads of Bar-

tok (folksy themes and rhythms) — without either his massive simultaneity or his wheeling structures. Astor Piazzolla, Kevin Volans, Peter Sculthorpe, Terry Riley: composers who have not understood Webern, let alone learned from Varèse, Kagel, Xenakis, Takemitsu. Estonian Arvo Part at least argues musically — extracting the Beethovenian stomach-ache from pianistic religiosity — but it is mostly regressive dross. The "accessibility" conferred by their pop-image profile seems to be a high road to nowhere.

John Zorn needs Kronos, though, to make his "low" cultural references (the latest DC Barman book, Napoléon Death, Henry Mancini) sufficiently outrageous. However, this is not really cultural privilege, more high spirits. Naked City are not quite as weird as Zorn thinks: the set (James Barry, the "Batman" theme, Morricone, Ornette) re-

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sembled those of the late Xero Slingsby. Zorn should come off the fence and apply himself to this music: slumming is only a joke for the rich. The band is not really as good (or rehearsed) as it needs to be: when the clash of styles is as mannered and deliberate as this, technical deficiencies become blatant. Zorn's alto balladry does not melt; Wayne Horvitz's cocktail piano does not float, Joey Baron cannot play brush drums to save his life (his over-emphatic, jolly drumming was an obstacle throughout). Lumbered with an electric bass, Fred Frith smiled charmingly but could not deliver the dazzle he is capable of on guitar.

Bill Frisell, though, saved the day. His outing on Big John Parton's "The Way I

Feel" was astonishing, long, curving lines segmented with extraordinary originality and precision, atonal intervals judged like a Dolphy or Taylor, melodic arcs worthy of Duane Allman or Frank Zappa.

Though Zorn's freak-outs fail to tap the chaos-in-three-dimensions that *Last Exit* and *Phalanx* manage to derive from Albert Ayler, his enthusiasm is infectious: as he directed the band into alternating jazz-pastiche and punk-noise things brightened. With "Snagglepus" his conduction made a funny and exciting collage of disparate elements (whereas his piece for Kronos, "Tex Avery Directs De Sade", sounded whimsical and gratuitous). Ornette Coleman's "Lonely Woman" sounded fine over free-rock thrash: Horvitz's electronics came into their own on "Graveyard Shift". A fun band. But are? For that, I'll go see the Raybeats.

BEN WATSON



## GOOD NEWS FROM JACK DANIEL'S. NO NEWS.

Our local paper can be read in five minutes. That's all it takes to keep up with Moore County.



Occasionally, you'll see an article on Jack Daniel's Distillery. Like when Jack Bateman broke his arm unloading wood in the rickyard. Or when Frank Bobo (our head Distiller) had his grandson born. But normally we don't make the paper much. You see, we've been mellowing whiskey here at Jack Daniel's since 1866. And according to the editor, there's no news in that anymore.



### SMOOTH SIPPIN' TENNESSEE WHISKEY

If you'd like to know more about our unique whiskey, write to us for a free booklet at the Jack Daniel Distillery, Lynchburg, Tennessee, USA.

## Z W E R I N

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### yo-ho-ho and a packet of c90s

**A N O P E N** letter on recent Blue Note albums signed by some of the label's artists like Bobby McFerrin, Tony Williams, Dexter Gordon, Stanley Jordan and McCoy Tyner claims that "home taping has put a sizeable dent in our incomes. It is jeopardising our . . . careers and is already causing record companies to limit the number of new artists they invest in . . ." The letter concludes with a request for "comments, questions or answers (pro or con)".

You asked for it. You appear to have swallowed the industry line hook and sinker. Although the International Federation of Phonogram and Video Producers (IFPI) complains of billion-dollar losses from home taping, the industry has grown from a gross yearly volume of approximately \$1 billion to \$4 billion since the introduction of car stereo and Walkman type machines. Pre-recorded cassette sales now account for more than 50% of total sales, and EMI, which owns Blue Note, recently announced record (!) profits. All of which does not lead one to conclude that cassettes have meant the downfall of the industry.

All of this sounds terribly serious and y'all know how much I hate "serious" but I also hate being hustled. I hate silliness even more. The industry is hustling itself. The scene is totally out of focus and sync.

Last year I taped a Johnny Clegg record for a friend of mine who earns 7,000 francs a month and cannot afford a lot of records. She liked it so much she bought the next Johnny Clegg record and taped it for her friends. Presumably, some of them will buy the following one. These are people who may never otherwise have discovered Clegg. And since I copied Billie Holiday's *Lady In Satin* for my 13-year-old son's Walkman last month he's after me to buy her CD reissues.

Home taping is free advertising, for gosh-darn sakes. It increases the appetite for recorded music. I could never understand the estimates the IFPI keeps publishing of how many billions the industry is losing from home taping. Nobody ever asked me or anybody I know how many copies of which recordings I make. I wouldn't remember anyway. I'd like to see

an estimate of how much sales home taping has generated.

**B E F O R E C A S S E T T E S** I did not have the luxury of listening to Charlie Parker while stuck in traffic jams or on autoroutes. I dreamed of it when I was on the road with Maynard Ferguson in the 50s – not to have to hear all that beepy musician talk for 500 miles. I'm thankful to the industry for that. (It did not, by the way, stop me from buying John Coltrane records.) But now that they hooked me on music of my choice just about anywhere and anytime I want it – one of the few examples of positive progress amidst the acid rain and repeating rifles – they are lobbying for a universal blank-cassette tax and a "blocking chip" on DAT cassettes and I suspect that what they are really when you get right down to it after is to block me from, or make me pay through the nose for, copying anything at all.

In other words, in this best-for-profits world, I would have to buy, say, five pre-recorded copies of the same title for my living room, office, bathroom, kid's Walkman and my car. Which is immoral, unmusical, a personal insult and stupid.

The blank-cassette tax is a cosmic example of how to misread reality. Most of what we copy today, we erase next week. There are only so many Glenn Goulds or Lester Youngs. The majority of the product is Kleenex, eminently disposable. So if they put a surtax on blank cassettes and I copy, say, 20 records before the tape wears down, it isn't going to earn anybody anything to speak of except my ill-will. Is the industry perchance planning to market a self-destruct one-copy-only blank cassette? Arrrrgh!

If the artwork (in uncopiable pastel shades) and the liner notes (in disappearing ink) on the professional product were more attractive more people might be willing to pay for the original, like they prefer to read a hardback to a softback book, to say nothing of a photocopy of a softback book.

Speaking of liner notes, we who write them should perhaps publish an open letter to all you home pirates out there asking for comments about our plight. You are jeopardising our careers. We have a right to a royalty for every copy. Think about it.



To avoid overfishing  
of the local waters,  
fishermen in Barbados  
occasionally spend a day ashore.



"In the warm Caribbean waters around Barbados we catch plenty of fresh Flying Fish, Red Snapper, Barracuda and Marlin.

But this is purely because we take time-off to let them breed in the under-water caves on the coral reef.

Which, in turn, gives us a chance to open a bottle of golden Cockspur Rum.

Mixed with coke, or just taken as it comes, it makes losing a day's fishing seem just about bearable.

As the afternoon wears on, our thoughts turn to

the ones that got away and to what the future has in store for them.

And, more often than not, we decide to give the fish the whole of the next day off too!"

Frankie Spence, Silver Sands, Christ Church, Barbados.



If you like drinking you may like the taste of smooth Cockspur Rum.



## g o o d b y e c o l u m b i a

AVANT-ALTOIST TIM BERNE SAYS SO LONG TO CBS, HELLO TO GRAHAM LOCK.

PHOTO: ANDREW POTHECARY.

TIM BERNE shakes his head in disbelief. "The whole episode with Columbia was bizarre," he chuckles quietly. "Totally bizarre."

Berne, a tall, hefty New Yorker, has just exploded a bombshell out to my cassette recorder. CBS, he tells me, are not taking up their option on his contract. The label is dumping him.

I suppose it makes perfect sense that the company which once axed Ornette and Mingus and drove Miles into the arms of WEA should now have dropped the most spectacular clanger of 1988. After all, Berne is only one of America's most original young altoists, whose two LPs for the label have attracted a swarm of near-ecstatic reviews.

It's not even about profits because, says Berne, his records have sold relatively well in the States (despite a conspicuous lack

of media-blitz promotion). So what is it about?

"The people in the higher echelon positions didn't like the music," he shrugs; "they had a real negative attitude to it. They couldn't figure out why they were doing this music, or what the hell it was I was doing anyway, so they dropped me."

*Bizarre* is the word. And, like the song says, there's no bizarreness like show bizarreness.

**N O T T H A T** Tim Berne's musical career has ever been ordinary. Born in Syracuse, NY, in the mid-50s, he didn't begin to play saxophone until he was 19 years old. Then, after studying briefly with Anthony Braxton and classical saxophonist Les Scott, plus a longer apprenticeship with Julius Hemphill, he started his own record label, Empire, and, too nervous to play with New York musicians, flew to the West Coast to record his debut LP with a group of people he'd barely met. (They included John Carter, Vinny Golia, Glenn Ferris, Roberto Miranda and Alex Cline.) This was in 1979.

"That was just a stroke of ignorance," says Berne, reflecting on the whole experience. "I'd helped Julius put out his record and I just said, well, this is what Julius did, so I'll do it. I got a bunch of music together and I called up Alex Cline, who I'd met through Julius, and said, could you put a band together? Because I wasn't comfortable yet with New York musicians — you have to sort of prove yourself and I wasn't really too aggressive. It's a more relaxed scene on the West Coast, and I went out there, not really knowing what the fuck I was doing, and I made that record."

Appropriately, the LP, *The Five-Year Plan*, opens with a track dedicated to Hemphill, still acknowledged by Berne as the major influence on his playing and composing. In fact, when he returned to New York from Oregon in 1974, he admits he was "really looking for Julius, because that record *Dugout A.D.* was what inspired me to play".

What in particular did you learn from him? I ask.

"Right from the beginning he stressed the importance of tone," recalls Berne, "the actual sound you produce. We spent a lot of time working on the natural overtone series; it's a way of extending your range, but it also serves as a real good way of working on your tone production, in terms of getting a big sound. I don't really have an alto-y sound, the lower-register stuff's probably moving into tenor territory and a lot of that's from doing these overtone studies and trying to match the fingered sound with the natural overtone sound, which is inherently thicker."

"So Julius stressed that, and he was also very encouraging when I was writing music. Rather than saying 'this is bullshit' or 'you don't know what you're doing', he would help me, show me ways of making it better."

Why was that first LP called *The Five-Year Plan*? Did you have a plan?

Berne laughs. "That was kind of a joke. But I sort of had this idea that I could be making a living five years from then. Which wasn't true," he laughs again, "but it was a nice thought."

**T H E N E X T** five years did see several more Berne records on the market: *7X*, *Spectre* and the live double *Songs And Rituals In Real Time* . . . on Empire were followed by two Soul Note releases, *Ancestors* and *Mutant Variations*, and then a final Empire album, the *Theoretically* duo with Bill Frisell, later reissued (with an extra track) on the German Minor Music label.

Of these, *7X* was again recorded on the West Coast, but by the time of *Spectre* Berne had "finally realised I had to get something happening in New York", and was working a lot with bassist Ed Schuller, who plays on the album with Alex Cline, trombonist James Harvey and trumpeter Olu Dara. A little later Berne met Paul Motian and the *Songs And Rituals* LP documents their first concert together, in NYC, July 1981.

Despite the quality of the music he was releasing, Berne found running his own label an increasingly difficult chore: "It was easier in the beginning, but there were so many labels putting our records by then, people were maybe getting more selective. I don't really know what happened, but it got a lot harder to find distributors." Which meant that Soul Note's interest was particularly timely. "I was always sending them tapes, and they were always rejecting them," Berne grins. "Then I sent them one and they said yes. I was shocked!"

*Ancestors* was recorded live in NYC in February 1983; *Mutant Variations* followed a month later, the product of a studio session in Milan, and, in the lilting alto that weaves through "Homage" perhaps offered the most convincing evidence to date of Berne as a newly authoritative saxophone voice. The LP with Frisell followed in 1984; then nothing until the fateful day when Gary Lucas, ex-Beefheart guitarist then working in the CBS advertising department, walked into Tower Records and recognised the guy behind the counter as Tim Berne, a childhood buddy from Syracuse. (Are you ready for *bizarre*?)

"He started talking to me, said he'd like to hear my music blah blah blah, so I slipped him a record, then forgot all about it. He came back and said, like, you want me to try and get you a deal with CBS? I said, no way! Don't even talk to me about it. I'm not gonna waste my time."

But Lucas persisted and finally persuaded Berne to bring some records and press-cuttings into his CBS office. Then, for the next couple of months, he'd call Berne periodically to say he was "working on it", it might happen.

"I told him, forget it. I got sort of pissed off — I told him, don't even talk to me about it unless there's a contract in your hand. I mean, it was such a ridiculous thought."

Then Lucas rang to say, yes, it was happening and "I just freaked out . . . I had no money, I was working as a clerk at Tower, yet suddenly I'm doing this record for CBS. I had to start thinking about this thing as a reality."

Berne now wonders if Lucas may have been, ah, economical with the truth in clinching the deal: like, for instance, taking the "more mellow" parts from Berne's earlier LPs and convincing the company they were signing a New Age artist. What they got, however, was *Fulton Street Mand*, one of 1987's most distinctive, riotous outbursts of electric jazz. Or, rather, string-quartet

## TIM BERNE

music.

"I did some gigs with Bill Frisell and Alex Cline in Europe, which were really good," Berne explains; "then a little later I was playing with Hank [Roberts] and decided to add cello. I basically wanted to avoid a free bop jazz sort of thing, I didn't want to have any kind of a 'jazz' sound. I finally decided to try this transparent, very string-quarter-sounding band — with alto, guitar and cello I thought you could get a kind of strings sound."

Lucas, producer for the LP, was a little nervous about this concept, which he thought might be a little *art* for CBS; but Berne insisted on complete control, brought the project in under budget, and was delighted to find *Fadow Street Man* acclaimed almost unanimously by the critics. But if the company were impressed, they weren't letting on.

"I had no contact . . . the guy that signed me, Gary probably just drove him crazy until he signed me, but I never met the guy, I never even talked to him. It was completely bizarre. And to this day he hasn't given me any feedback, even though of all their jazz records I easily get the most positive press — which constantly confounds them. I think it's almost disappointing to some of the people there, they were so sure I was a failed experiment, at best."

All that good press did make one vital difference: the company agreed to let Berne make a second LP — "to avoid embarrassment", he grins. Again he insisted on complete artistic control and got it, even down to choice of cover art. The resulting LP, *Sanctified Dreams*, featuring a quintet of Berne, Hank Roberts, trumpeter Herb Robertson, bassist Mark Dresser and drummer Joey Baron, was released in the USA in early '88 to even more rapturous reviews than its predecessor. This didn't deter CBS from neglecting to release the LP in Britain.

"The company didn't do anything for it, really," sighs Berne. "Especially over here. I mean, I come to Europe 80 times a year, I work here non-stop, and the support over here — with the exception of Switzerland — is pathetic. In England, the records don't come out; in Germany, they give me flowers instead of interviews! And it's the same for everybody in jazz. Wayne Shorter comes over on tour, he gets the same bullshit. It's totally mind-boggling."

In the long run, their attitude may do more harm to CBS than to Berne, who is already checking out offers from other labels. Meanwhile, the first LP from Miniature — the trio of Berne, Hank Roberts, Joey Baron — has just been released on the German JMT label. Though the *Sanctified Dreams* quintet remains Berne's primary project (and a European tour is planned for February, March '89), Miniature is also close to his heart.

"What I like about it is that it's a cooperative: we all write, trade ideas. Initially, the idea behind the group was to use a lot more electronics than, say, the quintet: to have this small group with a big sound, which is why we also use Hank's vocals more, to fill up the sound. Miniature's also a little more spontaneous, because it's easier to improvise on the spot with fewer people; it

requires a different kind of composing that I really like, very spare."

Spare is hardly the word to describe Berne's quintet writing, which he characterizes as "about rhythms, textures, harmonic ideas, tonal things, non-tonal things, moods, shapes . . . it's just like a movie or a book — you're looking for a lot of different ways to say the same things." He admits to a fascination with structure in terms which some might decry as conservative, but which are more to do with creating connections, a sense of wholeness greater than the sum of the parts, than any retreat to traditionalism.

"I like things to have a beginning and an end, and I like them to go somewhere, not just say, OK, we're gonna play the tune, solo, then play the tune out. So I set up things using the written material, little motifs and fragments — if it's done right, someone always has some place to go in their mind when they're playing. I've given them a structure, and they can do whatever they want, but they know where it has to begin and where it has to end. It's still spontaneous, but what I'm trying to do is set up a context for that spontaneity."

Nels Cline's *Songs And Rituals* sleeve-note makes a distinction between Berne's more structured *songs* and the "less overtly delineated", almost trance-like *rituals*; a differentiation which, I suggest to Berne, seems to leak through on to his CBS LPs and perhaps also runs back to his early teachers: for example, "Hip Doctor", from *Sanctified Dreams*, is a wittily intricate line that's reminiscent of a Braxton composition, while *Fadow Street's* "Betsy" is a plaintive meander that carries echoes of "Dogon A.D.".

Berne looks extremely sceptical. "I think I've developed a lot since *Songs And Rituals*, which is basically a blowing album," he demurs. "But 'Betsy' I wrote at that time, it's real early, so that's a good observation. The whole thing with vamps, for me . . . it can either be tedious or it can be this trance-like feeling, you just have to play it in a certain way that's very hard to explain. I'd never played 'Betsy' before because I never quite knew how to get it right." He gives a broad grin: "You know, some pieces are so simple it takes you years to figure out how they work."

It is this interest in structures and figuring out how they work, and in exploring alternatives to the standard head-solos-head form of so much "jazz", which links Berne with the older generation of avant-gardists like Braxton and Hemphill and also provides a point of contact with New York contemporaries like John Zorn, Wayne Horvitz, Bill Frisell, and his colleagues in Miniature and the quintet. All, though in very diverse ways, are engaged in a similar process of restructuralism. This time Berne offers tentative agreement, though with one reservation.

"I'm definitely not in the downtown scene."

Which is what?

"I don't know," he laughs. "But Ronald Shannon Jackson told Hank, Joey and me that he didn't want to be on a festival with downtown musicians, so we realized we were 'downtown musicians' that night. We've been trying ever since to figure out what it means."

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monumental piece of work."**

—Victoria Mather, DAILY TELEGRAPH

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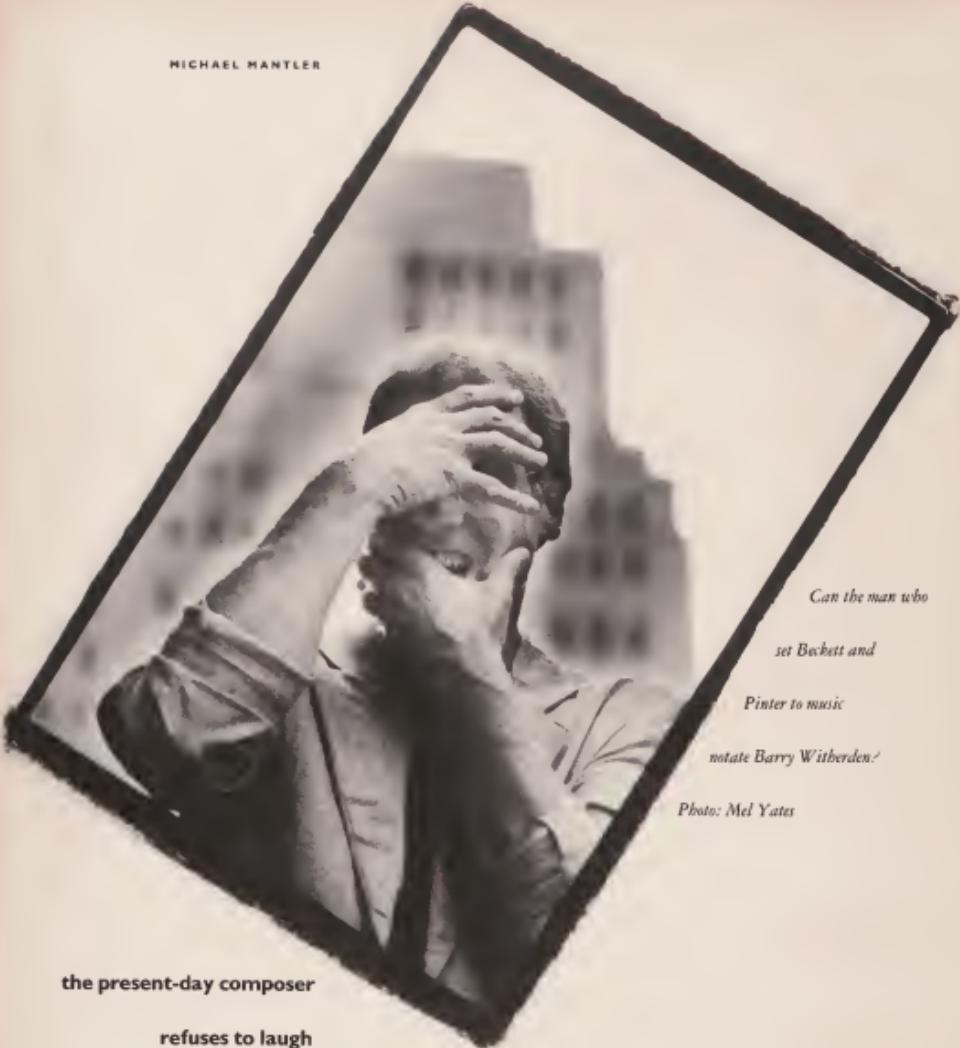
the present-day composer

refuses to laugh

CERTAIN CRITICS were recently castigated for referring to musicians like Carla Bley as composers, not "merely" performers. In fairness to those scribes it must be admitted that this attitude reflects the self-image of a number of musicians, including Bley *mari*, Michael Mantler. When I met him at the end of his European tour (designed to publicise *Many Have No*

*Speech* – reviewed in *Wire* 56), the talk was of writing, mixing and producing, but scarcely about playing. To emphasise the point, the tour included no gigs, just interviews.

"This record in particular is very important to me," Mantler said. "I've spent close on two years on it and I don't think the work is finished when the record is finished." *Speech* had gone



*Can the man who*

*set Beckett and*

*Pinter to music*

*notate Barry Witherden?/*

*Photo: Mel Yates*

through several phases – writing, realisation, recording, mixing, editing – "then the actual music is finished but it still doesn't exist unless it gets to its audience. Without that it doesn't exist outside my mind. Unrealised or even realised, that's irrelevant. It must find its audience."

A LITTLE light biography, Mantler was born in Vienna in 1943 and grew up in what he describes as "a fairly middle-class environment". From the age of 14 he played in dance bands, with no opportunity for jazz "other than stock big-band arrangements. I had no real creative experience." He moved to the States in 1962 and spent two and a half to three years in a Boston school "which I disregarded as a viable form of learning. I moved to New York in 1964 and immediately got involved with all the best and vital people like Cecil Taylor and Carla Bley. It was a very exciting time."

The only documentation of his association with Taylor at that stage was a private recording of a Town Hall concert in 1965; and the classic 1968 *Communications* sessions with Taylor and the Jazz Composers' Orchestra involved him as organiser and writer but not as trumpeter. His work with Carla Bley has of course been well documented on the label they founded, Watt, but his own albums for the label have tended to concentrate more on him as composer than as performer.

*Speech*, commissioned by Danish Radio for its Concert Orchestra, was originally recorded and broadcast in a purely instrumental version, but there had always been an understanding with the network that Mantler would be able to take the tapes and continue to work on them. The album adds to the orchestral tracks the voices of Jack Bruce, Marianne Faithfull and Robert Wyatt as well as Rick Fenn's guitar and Mantler's trumpet.

The vocal parts, says Mantler, had been written with specific voices in mind. "Jack and Robert are certainly my favourite singers because they're just wonderful musicians and wonderfully distinctive voices, and I've always liked Marianne too, her music and her voice. She had just mixed her last record at my studio. She got very interested and she did a great job."

As on most Watt albums Mantler worked behind the controls, so I was interested to get his response to a Steve Swallow comment that the studio is an "intimidating adversarial situation. The trick is to get the producer out of the booth. One way to do it is to become the producer." Did Mantler feel comfortable in the studio?

"Oh, I'm *not* comfortable in the studio, because there I have more or less complete control, particularly since I don't use a producer and very rarely an engineer. I prefer to do it myself, especially the mixing."

And did he feel positively uncomfortable on the stand?

"Yes, I do actually, especially when I'm the leader. When I was playing a part in someone else's music – Carla Bley's for instance – that was great. It was a different role, I was part of a whole, so I just did my part. But being a bandleader, there's a whole thing of a relationship with the audience which you have to maintain and really create, and I'm really not gifted at that."

MOST OF his records (and indeed those with others like Carla Bley and Charlie Haden) have been what used to be called "concept albums".

"That's an expression of being a composer. To me it's much more interesting if it's something that's a whole, with some idea behind it, rather than just playing an instrument for 45 minutes."

Was that the reason for the literary element in many of his works?

"I don't usually – at least not recently – say, oh these are words I want to write music to. It really works the other way round. I want to hear voices and since to me voices have to sing something I'm looking for words. To me wordless vocals, experimenting with the voice, is not very interesting. Really that's instrumental music, so I look for texts. I look for certain kinds of words and I seem to have found them in actually rather old contemporary writers who to me are very modern. Beckett's writing is so concise and economical and says so much. There's no one now who even comes close. Of course it's not only a formal idea I'm looking for. The words have to say what I want to say with the music."

Mantler has also set poems by Pinter, who, like Beckett, uses words economically. Did they appeal to him because he heard a similarity with his music?

"I don't think there's anything similar other than the most basic underlying feeling, which may not necessarily be apparent to some listeners. Although, if someone liked Beckett and heard my music in its instrumental form they could draw a parallel; not really in economy of expression but how it comes across emotionally."

Beckett and Pinter also exhibit an individual brand of grim humour. Did he connect with that especially?

"It's not necessarily what interests me. For better or worse there is not a lot of humour in my music."

Mantler denies that there's any serialism in what he does; not much minimalism; but plenty of Romanticism. Does that derive from his European background? No.

"I spent less than half my life there and I wasn't really listening to classical music. What I listened to was jazz."

But much Mantler music seems highly organised. How much improvisation is there?

"Very little. Whatever is improvised or played freely is based on very specific things and also heavily edited by me afterwards because of the nature of multi-tracking. In a way, it's like even more composition after the fact. The beauty of using jazz players is that they're used to reacting to situations and adding something of their own."

"You may not know where a piece moves from a written melody to a part that's been improvised. That, to me, is when it becomes successful."

#### Records

The Hapless Child (*Watt*)  
Live (*Watt*)  
Movies (*Watt*)

#### More Movies (*Watt*)

Something There (*Watt*)  
Alien (*Watt*)  
Speech (*Watt*)

faces for '89

\* \* \* \*

We chose a quartet of young musicians who promise great things for the coming year . . .



**SUE SHATTOCK** by Rob Clifford

Already making major waves on the London club circuit, Sue sings with her own small group and works in duo with Terry Disley. The vocalist of '89?



**GERARD PRESENCER** by Richard Dean

A teenage sensation on trumpet, Gerard has bowled over musicians and audiences alike with his youthful mastery. Currently gigging with Clark Tracey and sure to surprise many in the next year.



faces for '89

\* \* \* \*



**FAYAZ VIRJI** by Neil Drabble

Trombonist and arranger, his contributions to the book on the recent tour of Jazz Warriors reflected some of the most interesting music the band has yet played. Watch for his new music next year.

**MARK SANDERS** by Patrice Felix-Tchicaya

Another in the fine tradition of British free percussionists, Mark has performed in a duo with Evan Parker and is at work in the improvising community.

## WIRE-CARLSBERG BRITISH JAZZ AWARDS 1988

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FOR THE third consecutive year, votes came in from all parts of the country – and even plenty from abroad – as erudite, discerning readers voted in W'm's British Jazz Awards. We were a bit concerned when the postal dispute held up our mail for a few weeks, but the torrent of votes which arrived as soon as it was over led to many exhausting hours tabulating the results.

Voting in a number of categories was desperately close; in others, the winners walked it. ANDY SHEPPARD strolled away from most of the opposition in Best Instrumentalist, although previous winners Courtney Pine and Evan Parker still polled many votes and Tommy Smith did likewise. The saxophone still rules, it seems. In the vocal stakes, CLEVELAND WATKISS repeated his narrow triumph last year but upped the margin of victory, with Norma Winstone his only real challenger.

Best Band turned into quite a tussle between eventual winners HUMAN CHAIN and semi-parent body Loose Tubes, with the trio acing the big team by a few votes at the death. Other contenders included Jazz Warriors, Pinski Zoo, Andy Sheppard's Band and the Brotherhood Of Breath. The Tubes were unlucky again in the Best Album Category, since *Open Letter* was neck-and-neck with *Destiny's Song* for most of the voting, Courtney pulling into the lead with the last few votes. Thirty different records featured in the voting, a pretty healthy tally for British jazz on record.

Best Composer was another close-run thing. Last year's victor Django Bates had the tables turned on him by older maestro MIKE WESTBROOK this time, but there were plenty of votes too for Roland Perrin, Barbara Thompson, Stan Tracey and Steve Berry. Best New Band seemed to have a lot of people scratching their heads, with a rush of enthusiasm for brand-new outfits like Orphy Robinson's Quartet and the Paul Reid Sextet. It was GANG OF THREE, though, which took top honours. Somebody sign these guys up!

The one section which brooked no argument was Best Newcomer. JASON REBELLO polled four times as many votes as his nearest rival just as well we booked him to play at the Jazz Awards ceremony!

Thanks to all who voted this year. By the time you read this, the ever-glittering Awards Night will have been and gone, but just too late for us to get a report into this issue. Full coverage of the festivities in February's *Wire*!

*The full results of how you voted*

<b>BEST INSTRUMENTALIST</b>	: ANDY SHEPPARD
<b>BEST BAND</b>	: HUMAN CHAIN
<b>BEST VOCALIST</b>	: CLEVELAND WATKISS
<b>BEST COMPOSER</b>	: MIKE WESTBROOK
<b>BEST NEW BAND</b>	: GANG OF THREE
<b>BEST NEWCOMER</b>	: JASON REBELLO
<b>BEST ALBUM</b>	: DESTINY'S SONG, COURTNEY PINE



## JAZZ GIANTS

Edited by K. Abe  
(Columbus, £35.00)

WHAT WAS Miles Davis saying when he was snapped at Bardland in 1949 by Popie Randolph? Posterity doesn't know. But you can gaze on Miles as he was, and scores of others, in a sumptuous new collection of jazz photographs. *Jazz Giants* includes some of the finest work of William Claxton, William Gottlieb, Chuck Stewart, Bob Parent and many others. The photos span the early days — promo shots of Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington — through bebop and cool, up to the 80s. Some colour, mostly monochrome, and many hauntingly beautiful: Chet Baker young and fragile, Billie Holiday in '56, Coltrane through a grey mist. A colour shot of 52nd Street seems to show another world altogether. Toshiko and George Wein make an hilarious couple. Bill Claxton's shot of Red Garland is a brush with the spirit world. K. Abe, who compiled and took some of the photos, has put together a marvellous book.

RICHARD COOK

## UNHEARD MELODIES

by Claudia Gorbman  
(BFI Publishing, £18/£7.95)

SIXTY YEARS have passed since the introduction of sound revolutionised film. Even after all these years it is still reeling from the blow, reluctant to concede any of the picture's authority. Rather than think of film as the great *Gesamtkunstwerk* of the 20th century, inside which image-word-sound each has its own significant role to play in the construction of the whole, most film-makers still think of music as an afterthought, something secondary to the story, a Morse code that telegraphs mood and location, signals emotional twists and underscores — "Mickey Mouses" — the action.

In Hollywood and its European satellites music is often meant to be seen and not heard, unless it is a pop hit whose accompanying video cuts in scenes from the film it promotes; or a sequence of source songs tapping the audience's collective memory of



the recent past, the accompanying soundtrack record an additional marketing tool.

Of course, all these functions, properly organised, can be valid. Max Steiner was Hollywood's master court composer, serving up efficient mood manipulations according to his masters' requirements. He is one of the three figures to come under close scrutiny in Gorbman's welcome study of an area considerably neglected by musicology. Citing Steiner's work, she deftly illustrates how Hollywood deploys music as an agent to soften audiences, to help suspend disbelief, sluice jumpcuts in the action, aid *suspense*, and, most essentially, bind spectators emotionally to the play of images onscreen, all the time without drawing listeners' attention to itself. Elsewhere, she examines how music can participate more fully in creating film as a total audiovisual experience, focusing on Maurice Jaubert's work for Jean Vigo's classic *Zéro de Conduite*, and reluctant René Clair's *Sous Les Toits De Paris*.

So far as it goes Gorbman's book is fine, aside from the scurs left by scatterblasting the subject with semiological jargon. But its value is considerably undermined by the author's

self-imposed limits. Stating that her intention is to bring classic Hollywood usage of music into clear focus, she comfortably ignores developments that might undermine her central argument. The more complex sound montages constructed by American cinema in the 70s (Sorokin's *Main Streets*, Altman's *The Long Goodbye* to name but two) offer evidence that modern film-makers brought up in the everpresence of pop and jazz, have an extraordinarily sophisticated grasp of the textural interplay of noise and picture. And, whatever the author's self-imposed restrictions, it ought to be impossible for a study of film music to ignore a director like the German Hans-Jürgen Syberberg, who constructs films as symphonies.

Her study would have been far more satisfying had she pursued the leads laid down in the book's later Vigo/Clair sections. Ultimately, *Unheard Melodies* — stimulating though it is — suffers from the curse of Barthes: it submits to the tyranny of the neo-Barthesian obsessive fascination with popular culture to the exclusion of the more valuable work on its fringes that keeps the centre alive.

BIBA KOPE

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New Orleans "avant-gardist"

THE

Henry "Red" Allen is reassessed

JAZZ

by Martin Gayford in our

AGE

occasional series on early masters.

IN THE years between the wars the USA was overrun by multitudinous hordes of musicians. Bands were everywhere and jobs were plentiful, although pay was often low. The trumpeters were the most numerous tribe of all and among them Louis Armstrong was the king; but, despite his influence, there was great stylistic variety. Individuality was the best path to employment; indeed, it was the only way to get into an élite group like Duke Ellington's or Fletcher Henderson's. "In those days," as Duke himself wrote, "the chief requisite was good personality of tone, identification." All the players worked for that; the most successful were as easy to tell apart as a trombone from a tuba. In this world one of the most prominent figures, next to Louis, was another New Orleans trumpeter, Henry "Red" Allen.

Allen started under Armstrong's shadow. Victor Records, for example, saw him as a Satchmo surrogate. The series of recordings they started in 1929 under the name "Henry Allen Jnr and His New York Orchestra" used the same format and many of the same musicians as Armstrong's popular issues on Columbia. Allen was just 21 at the time. It must have seemed as if he, too, was on the brink of stardom. But there was only room for one Louis, and Allen spent his life, like most jazz demi-gods, working in band sections, bars and little clubs. However, if his career was a damp squab in showbiz terms, musically it was a triumph. Always distinctive, a decade or so before his death Allen elaborated his style into a luxuriantly personal idiom. He became, in fact, an extraordinarily individual performer — a unique jazz expressionist.

The music seemed to flow out of him spontaneously: emotional, unpredictable and richly various. Allen played with button-holing intimacy. An Allen solo followed no set routine; instead, it seemed to chart a fluctuating pattern of feeling from one moment to another. "Playing," he told Whitney Balliett, ". . . [is] like someone making your lip speak . . . it's a home language, like two friends talking." For each emotional nuance,

there was a different instrumental shading. In his final phase Allen took the search for tonal individuality about as far as it could go.

He was master, not just of one unmistakable sound, but of a whole palette. Most of his tonal colours were rugged (he didn't seem interested in the sleek effect many trumpeters aim for), but the range was kaleidoscopic. He could fall to a husky whisper, or rise to a yell. He could play half-valve tricks, flutter-tongue, and produce a blood-curdling throat growl. He could descend into a fruity basement below the normal trumpet register, and, if he felt like it, he could still play in the broad, handsome, Armstrong manner.

Don Ellis, another trumpeter experimenter, listed Allen's "dirty" techniques in a 1965 *downbeat* article ("bends, smears . . . rips, glissandos"). He also emphasised other aspects of Allen's playing: his astonishing control of dynamics, his rhythmic subtlety, the audacious asymmetry of his phrases. Allen's music was invariably surprising. His melodic lines are always turning unexpected corners. Bunk Johnson once remarked, "Where my boy Louis makes it up, I make it down." "Red" Allen did both, unpredictably. The result is to keep the listener always on the edge of his or her seat. Yet all this oddity was combined in a completely convincing musical language, and it always swung.

Ellis gave his piece the uncompromising title "Henry 'Red' Allen Is The Most Avant Garde Trumpeter In New York", and the recordings made in those years support the idea that he was one of the most unorthodox players around at that time. This, despite the fact that he never really left the musical world of the early 30s. The two finest late albums, *Stormy Weather* and *Ride, Red, Ride In Hi-Fi*, were made in the company of swing veterans, some of whom he had been playing with since the Wall Street Crash. Unlike Coleman Hawkins, for example, he never seemed happy in modernist circles. As late as 1961, on the other hand, he made some records with Kid Ory's New Orleans revival

group, and sounded fairly comfortable. Indeed, the very qualities which Ellis admired (tonal distortions, for example) were aspects of the swing tradition that bop had discarded.

ALLEN was born in 1908 into the heart of the New Orleans musical world. His father, Henry Senior, led an important band with which all the best men played at one time or another. Bolden, Bechet, Oliver, Armstrong, Kppard. The young Allen grew up surrounded by all this and had the advantage of formal training, from a man called Manuel Manetta, who could play two trumpets at the same time. Nine years younger than Armstrong, Allen was the final heir to the grand tradition of New Orleans trumpeters/cornetists which began with Buddy Bolden. King Oliver summoned Allen north to join his band in 1927, just as he had called Armstrong five years previously. No sooner was he established in New York in 1928, than he began to record with the godfathers of the New Orleans clan: Oliver, Jelly Roll Morton and Armstrong.

Although, by birth, training and background, Allen appeared Armstrong's natural successor, in some respects his approach was opposite. By the late 20s, Armstrong's style had become a jazz equivalent to oratory. Floating on an air-cushion of big-band chords, he played solos that were as orderly and as moving as the Gettysburg address – and also as premeditated. Allen's playing, in comparison, was loose and episodic. Armstrong was inclined to tinker with a favourite set of choruses for decades; Allen told Whitney Balliett that he only ever thought a couple of bars ahead of what he was playing. That reflects no discredit on either. Some musicians are inveterate improvisers, some are not; but it is certainly a crucial difference in temperament.

If one listens to Armstrong's 1929 recording of "St Louis Blues", on which both men play, the divergence is clear. Louis's climactic solo, one of the most electrifying he ever produced, is organised with crystalline clarity. Every note drops into place within the grand design. Allen, who plays up until the vocal,

## THE TRUMPETER



## THAT TIME FORGOT

sounds superficially rather similar, but he is already using rhythmic displacements and dissonant intervals which create an edgy, unsettling effect. Where Louis is Classical, Allen is Romantic.

I asked Doc Cheatham, almost the sole survivor of Allen's generation of trumpeters, for his assessment of Allen, and he summed him up like this: "He was what I would call a nervous kind of a player. He had so many ideas all the time, and he could express them all on his instrument because he was such a technical player. Several of them from New Orleans were very technical players; Jimmie Noone, he was another. Certainly there was no one in those days who sounded more like Louis, but Red always stayed close to the New Orleans sound, and you know Louis moved away from that feeling after the Hot Fives and the things he did in the 20s. Also Louis was less nervous, more considered."

FOR THE SIX or so years after he arrived in New York, Allen was ubiquitous. He played with a string of important bands: Luis Russell, Don Redman, Fletcher Henderson, Lucky Millinder. Apparently always on call for a session, he was the most recorded trumpeter in town. He made a long series of sides under his own name, starting in 1929 with two fast tracks, "It Should Be You" and "Swing Out", and two sulphurous slow ones, "Biffy Blues" and "Feeling Drowsy". His music reached its first baroque flowering in the early 30s. By that time he had formed some important musical partnerships. One was with the granite-toned trombonist, J.C. Higginbotham. Another was with the equally exploratory saxophonist, Coleman Hawkins, with whom he made smouldering, passionate music on sides like "Heartbreak Blues", "Dark Clouds" and "My Galveston Girl". On most of these Allen sang, his voice taking the same helter-skelter path as his trumpet (Martin Williams recalled that he once got in six notes just on the word "I"). In 1932 he encountered a further like-minded colleague in the white clarinettist, Pee Wee Russell. They were brought together in a studio-assembled group, the Rhythmakers. The results are among the most daring pieces of collective improvisation in jazz. Indeed, it is hard to think of anything else that has quite the same carefree, hold-on-to-your-hats-and-here-we-go air as "Bugle Call Rag", the wildest Rhythmakers track of all.

Whenever something interesting was going on in those days, Allen seemed to bob up. When the Irishman, Spike Hughes, came to New York to record his rhapsodic compositions with an American band, for example. Or when Fletcher Henderson decided to use a Coleman Hawkins concoction, "Queer Notions", based on a whole-tone row (quite an experiment in 1933). Or when Don Redman put down two of his finest scores, "Chain Of The Weed" and "Shakin' The African", on the second of which Allen took one of his most celebrated solos. So fractured, so involved, so fiery is this improvisation, in fact, that it once inspired a friend of Allen's to exclaim, "Man, he even invented bebop!"

But he didn't, of course. In fact, after the mid-30s he drifted further and further away from the vanguard of the music. He was not among the older musicians who welcomed bop. On the contrary. Buck Clayton remembers him warning the young Miles Davis off the stage one night at the Uptown House, "No, kid, get out. We don't want you up here now." In the 40s he appeared with swing musicians or old *confidantes* from New Orleans like Sidney Bechet. His own little band of the period sounds raucous and heavy, on record at least, as if he had been put off his stroke by the advent of modernism. In the 50s he tended to become associated with the more leathery kind of traditional revival. His habit of prefacing every number with a jovial cry of "Wump! Wump!" can only have added to this impression. Similarly, his willingness to play whiskery crowd-pleasers like "When The Saints Go Marching In". In the 50s and 60s he spent long years at the Metropole, a bar where the band had to play triple forte to stand any chance of carrying over the din. All of this tended to obscure the freshness of his playing.

WHAT, THEN, were the roots of his style? Perhaps they lay in New Orleans, but the history of jazz in the Delta is murky and controversial. Doc Cheatham, who hails from Nashville, was cautious: "There were so many of them down there, it was like another country, and they all listened to each other." Allen learnt Armstrong's Hot Fives from a wind-up phonograph, but he also mentioned a crowd of other trumpeters: Chris Kelly, Emmet Hardy, Kid Rena, Punch Miller, Buddy Petit, Richard Alexis and Henry Rene. Most of these never recorded, or did so very much later. Allen implied that his high-note excursions stemmed from Kid Rena. It could also be that some of his smears and rasps came from the "dirty", blues-based strand of playing that started with Buddy Bolden, and also seems to have included Chris Kelly, for one. New Orleans music started with the stiffness of ragtime and moved towards greater and greater flexibility of line; perhaps Allen was simply carrying on in that direction.

It was not so much that he moved away from newer developments in jazz, as that they moved away from him. A musician like Coleman Hawkins, who had long based his playing on harmonic exploration, could incorporate a good deal of bop into his style. Allen, interested in melodic, tonal and rhythmic variation, could not. Interestingly, another essentially melodic improviser, Lester Young, either could not or would not assimilate bop. And Pres, too, developed a late style based on rhythmic audacities and melodic embellishment. In the 50s Young was often thought an alcoholic wreck, Allen an eccentric has-been. At the time, with the forward progress of jazz more hectic every day, such an attitude was understandable. Now, with the evolutionary motor of jazz apparently jammed, it's a good moment to take a look at musicians who strayed off the beaten track and explored the open fields beside. Henry "Red" Allen, a master of his craft and an original musical mind, is surely a perfect example.

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DAVE O'HIGGINS

## three's a gang

The tenor tyro

from Roadside Picnic

and Gang Of Three

is taking giant

steps towards the 90s.

Report: Tony Herrington.

Photo: Nick White.

L E T S START, surprisingly enough, at the beginning.

"I got switched on to music at a very young age. At school I just wanted to play an instrument. Particularly when I saw a drum kit. I thought that that was going to be really something. It's very attention-grabbing, I suppose, a drum kit. I think it must be the closet extrovert in me."

Dave O'Higgins, a 24-year-old tenor saxophonist who once played drums and now looks more easy-going casual than closet extrovert, is beginning to warm to the task of relating his life story to a complete stranger.

"When I was about 11 or 12 there was a big band at my school doing Glenn Miller material. I really enjoyed playing drums and it was quite a buzz for a 12-year-old to be playing in a big band. Then when I was 14 I joined a functions band. All semi-pro musicians. It did all the mixed dancing stuff, congas, square tangos, all that. It was a good grounding and I was making about £40 a week which wasn't bad for a 14-year-old. I was the richest kid in school."

Big bands, Glenn Miller, square tangos. A good grounding maybe, quite a buzz even for a 12-year-old, but when you go home after spending an evening plodding your way through "American Patrol" or "Pennsylvania 65000" and then go see John Bonham in *The Song Remains The Same* take a 15-minute drum solo that sounded as if it could lay waste to the entire Miller Orchestra single-handed, well, maybe it wasn't much of a buzz

after all.

"I was perhaps a little bit precocious," ventures Dave gingerly. "By the time I was 11 I was already sick of pop music and was listening to stuff like Led Zeppelin, Van der Graaf Generator and King Crimson. So I formed a group with a few like-minded people ripping off Genesis and Yes tunes, stuff like that. We were never allowed to play at school because it was like an underground band that was all the encouragement we needed. I think that's one of the reasons I got into jazz and progressive rock, because it was considered decadent at school."

JAZZ AND progressive rock; these are the two cornerstones upon which is built the music of Roadside Picnic, the electro-acoustic quartet that looks set to propel Dave O'Higgins before a large audience for the first time since he played to 14,000 cash-paying customers at The North Sea Jazz Festival as a temporary member of Icelandic jazz-funk group Mezzoforte.

The group's first LP was originally scheduled for a November release date on RCA's Novus subsidiary but won't now appear until next March. For Dave, a five-month postponement of what is in effect his vinyl debut is frustrating rather than ominous. "No one was more surprised than us when we got picked up by a major label," he says, "but we were one of the first instrumental groups they signed so I like to think we're quite dear to their hearts."

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The nature of the group's music – with its complex time signatures, the inclusion of elements from South Indian classical music and traditional African drum patterns, and its elaborate compositions which draw from Weather Report and King Crimson as much as any recognisably conventional jazz sources – sounds reminiscent of the records that first introduced Dave to jazz that wasn't white, didn't wear uniforms and didn't exist as a backdrop for mixed dancing.

"I remember reading interviews with rock bands that I listened to and they'd all be saying that they listened to Miles Davis and *Bitches Brew*," he says. From discovering that the music of King Crimson and Soft Machine hadn't sprung fully-formed from a vacuum but had as its inspiration the late 60s/early 70s recordings of Davis, Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea and Joe Zawinul, it didn't take much effort to trace that inspiration back to its own original source.

"I met a pianist called Andrew Stanton who had loads of old Davis and Charlie Parker records," Dave recalls. "He lent me the whole lot and I just steeped myself in them."

"I remember the first one I listened to was *Kind Of Blue*. I really enjoyed the saxophones on that, the garrulous, happy nature of Cannonball Adderley's playing. But what meant more to me was the rather darker, more intense feel of John Coltrane's playing. I suppose if any one thing can be said to have inspired me to play the sax it was Coltrane's playing on that record."

Well, there you have it. The inevitable. By the time he'd had his first saxophone a year – bought when he was 16 with the money he'd earned from his dance-band work – he was practising six hours a day and getting as many commercial gigs as a saxophonist as he was as a drummer. A year after that he'd passed the audition for a seat in the reed section of the NYJO, blagged his way on to the music-degree course at London's City University and during the summer term began attending John Dankworth's residential Wavendon jazz courses, staying in the room next door to Ian Ballamy one year, meeting Julian Arguelles the next. Making contacts, you might say. Building the foundation.

I want to ask what else he saw in the saxophone besides the ability of a player like Coltrane to turn it into a vessel for heightened emotional states, but the question comes out sounding stupid in my head. Instead I wonder aloud why it is that a group like Roadside Picnic, with its booming electronic sound and progressive attitude, can get signed to a major label without even trying for it, whereas the Gang Of Three, the Coltrane-inspired group that Dave leads when he's not a member of Roadside Picnic and which includes in its repertoire a version of "Giant Steps", can't even get a single album, no options, independent deal?

Is it perhaps indicative of the rot that seems to have set in against the derivative nature of much of the New British Jazz? Like the way in which the career of a player like Steve Williamson seems to have stalled before it's even got started? Dave throws out one of those long pauses that punch frequent and considerable holes into his conversation. He's not about to

commit himself lightly on such a loaded subject.

"I think," he says eventually, "that there is a problem with a lot of the stuff that's had media attention over the last few years. There's a problem with it in the sense that it's essentially a revivalist thing, it's not offering something new. It deals with very derivative, very specific areas, and as with most of these things they enjoy revival periods in the same way that rockabilly or heavy metal or whatever does. I mean, there will always be revival periods but I think that anything that is slightly pastiche-orientated will always be fairly transient."

"But by the same token you've got to have influences. You can't avoid that and Coltrane is one of those really seminal figures who you either thoroughly assimilate or you avoid. And being a tenor-sax player it's impossible for that not to be reflected to some extent in your playing. Although having said that, by the kind of music you play you can attempt to develop some kind of originality that goes beyond that."

"I suppose a good example would be Jan Garbarek. I remember reading an interview with him and what he said about Coltrane's influence was that the way he liked to interpret it wasn't specifically through what Coltrane played or how he played it but through the spirit that has playing had, that feeling of emotional intensity. The danger comes when everything you do is derivative."

**T**HIS IS how Dave O'Higgins would like us to see his music in general and that of Gang Of Three in particular. Superficially it's probably not so hard. Bass guitars, drum samples and cover versions of Chick Corea and Tower Of Power tunes aren't ingredients you'd immediately associate with a genre that prides itself on getting its period detailing right – clothes, instrumentation, material, you name it – yet they all have their place in Gang Of Three's taught, finely-honed sound. It is the saxophone, however, that acts as the group's focus-pull. Maybe it's the open-ended nature of the music, what Dave refers to as "our opportunity to indulge ourselves", that draws him into delivering his own approximation of Coltrane's infamous "sheets of sound", but during the group's set at the Outside In festival this September only the music's minor nuances set it apart from that of any other Neo-Traditional revival.

It's an accusation that doesn't particularly worry him. He cites the formation of a new quartet that has been inspired by the music of Ralph Towner and Michael Brecker as evidence of his intention to "keep a healthy diversity going, to establish something that's a reaction to the Coltrane thing". What's more, he's well aware of his own limitations and of the time it could take for him to do justice to some of the claims that have already been made on his behalf.

"Quite honestly I feel that I'm not ready for too much attention yet," he says. "I'm quite happy about it because I'm still getting it together. I've come a long way already but I've still got a long way to go. I suppose I'll always feel like that." He throws out another of those pauses. "Maybe I'm too much of a perfectionist."



b e f o r e   a n d   a f t e r   s i l e n c e



*Elegant, Crystalline, Mysterious or Enervated, Chilly, Morose?*

In this rare interview, Europe's leading label boss explains exactly what

ECM stands for. Text: Richard Cook.

FOR ALMOST 20 years, Manfred Eicher's ECM has been an island. Contemplation, clarity, distance, the quiet intensity; "the most beautiful sound next to silence". ECM has had its moments of commercial calculation but, as Eicher says, "you can't calculate with music" – at least, not the way he hears it.

The rigorous principles which Eicher has held over his recordings have created a body of music that seems purposely designed to reject most of the cans and muddiness attached to the contemporary outpourings of the world's record companies. It is not easy terrain. ECM's exterior can be forbidding, from the austerity of the record sleeves to the almost doctrinal musical paths which the label's favourite sons have followed. Even more than Blue Note or Candid or ESP or any of the great jazz labels of the past, ECM has established an identity which cloaks its content as strongly as its artists do.

Manfred Eicher doesn't see it quite that way, of course. To hear Eicher speak, one would think that the whole enterprise has been directed on *laissez-faire* lines. Eicher started by borrowing some money and recording albums by then-starless names such as Keith Jarrett, Jan Garbarek and Chick Corea. It could have amounted to no more than another eager little European independent, but something about those early releases clicked. Instead of conveying the hot enthusiasm which a label like BYG had approximated with their series of expatriate Black American albums, Eicher's records were cool, considered, luxuriantly recorded.

With hindsight, ECM has looked to be a superb piece of marketing ever since. In the early 70s, the label forged a clear, boundary-crossing identity when jazz was confused and homeless, continued to set exacting standards of recording as digital conditions took over the industry, pre-empted the widespread return to acoustic music in the last decade or so, fostered "world music" collaborations before the term had been coined, elevated even the lesser musings of its artists by its presentation and thus

maintained a sense of creative continuity, anticipated the demands for quality and personal kudos by an older record-buying audience, and promoted the concert-hall ambitions of players such as Lester Bowie.

Eicher sees none of this as part of ECM's philosophy. His intention, he says, is simply "to capture what is going on in the music". He has said elsewhere that "by withdrawing, we are much more likely to achieve clarity than by always being in the middle of things". It's not so much that ECM is intellectually lofty or pretentious but simply remote from the voracious concerns of an industry bent on selling. Even small independents appear tigerish about their product compared with the distracted demeanour of ECM.

It's easy to be sceptical of Eicher's philosophy and intentions, which is why so many critics have been, for as long as the label has gone on. One can forgive the producer for seeming bitter about it all. He's shored up 20 years of people saying that he suffocates musicians and stifles passion, that ECM is cold, soulless, pompous, unemotional, dry, dull. His response has been to withdraw advertising and refuse interviews and carry on with his work.

WHEN HE came to London last spring, to work on the recording of Arvo Pärt's *Passio*, recently released in ECM's New Series of albums of contemporary composition, Manfred Eicher took out a morning to walk down to a Hampstead coffee shop and talk about his label. He is a slim, rather careworn-looking man, whose great energy and dedication don't always break through a cautious temperament. His small, shapeless face is surmounted by a carefree thatch of greying hair, his eyes have the pale glitter of graphite; he's not much given to laughing. But he warms to anything he senses is kindred to his own beliefs.

It's tempting to think that ECM's New Series, a matter close to Eicher's heart, will be the main thrust of his future operations.

He talks of Arvo Pärt with the same primary concern that might once have been directed to Eberhard Weber or Keith Jarrett. But he denies that he places more importance on any one part of ECM's repertoire, and it's more likely that he's narrowing his interests to certain qualities in the music, whatever the genre. It's not as if ECM has changed very much over the past 20 years.

"Since I've been doing it for 20 years I'm much more involved and I don't see it from the outside. I do feel that our premises are still the same, but I hope it has changed in 20 years. I think there are enormous changes, actually."

Such as?

"Like in the New Series. In the differentiation of sound in the different projects that we're doing. That kind of stupid criticism that one reads now about the so-called ECM sound is so irrelevant that it's as irrelevant as comparing Pat Metheny's records now with what he did when he was making his group records with us."

There's no need to open this old wound in Eicher's hearing: he's only too ready to do it himself. But recording the sort of music ECM has enshrined has changed throughout the industry. The elegance and resonance of a typical ECM mix has been achieved in many fields; even conventional standards of recording, on one-day-in-the-studio jazz records, have a finesse unimaginable 20 years ago.

"It's improved enormously, and yet, OK, that's a given thing, I'm glad that things have improved. But if you look to classical music or the fine Decca label or L'Oiseau Lyre in the past history of recording, they were always good. In jazz, people weren't used to it, and people talk too much about sound. For me, it's only the technical side. The musical side is much more interesting."

"Every kind of music you're going to record requires its special sound. I don't impose a sound on music or an instrument — I try to find its sonic nature. If you're recording Arvo Pärt's music, the weight of each single note counts. Tone and sound must derive from inside, the secret must be there — in the recording."

What has to interest him in a musician which makes him want to record them for ECM?

"I have to be touched, in some way. Something has to ring . . . an aesthetical quality close to our ideas. There's no criteria, but in some way it has to feel that there is something there that we can develop. I don't want someone who's just on the market and famous or hip, or whatever. There's too much of that going on. We'd like to still do what we feel is a part of what we think and what we do. It can't be defined. It could be anybody who presents a project which has substance."

"We have no ideology and no strategies and we have no observer of the market, to look around and see what's going on. It comes and goes and comes and goes. I've been working with Jan Garbarek for 20 years, and if you realise the changes in the results one can see it was the right thing to do."

So what happens when Eicher goes into the studio for the first time with a new ECM-er? Is there preparation?

"Mostly nothing is prepared. I listen — sometimes I even listen

to tapes, before we go into the studio. That's the place to work. In improvised music if people come together for the first time, you become part of that group if you're a good producer. Sometimes not much support is needed — then music starts to fly. Something takes shape. This happened with the *Mágico* sessions in Oslo with Garbarek, Haden and Gismonti, where everyone came from a different place. In this case, as a listener you're part of the group. What we finally have is the musical documentation of everyone's input, including the engineer of course, if you have a guy with sensitive ears like Jan Erik Kongshaug.

"I like to do many things at the same time. Not only jazz, not only with written music. I want to do literature, too, and some small film projects. We've done Bruno Ganz reading Hölderlin."

How does he decide if a record's successful or not?

"If you enjoy listening to it. If 'success' is a matter of sales figures to you, then I must say we've been lucky so far. When we made the first records, musically and commercially, it was a result of the liking of the music and the ability to capture the momentum of this music at the right time. The records I'm talking about were all made in Oslo at the beginning of the 70s: Chick Corea's *Piano Improvisations*, Jan Garbarek's *Afrik Pepperbird*, Keith Jarrett's *Facing You*. The success of Paul Bley's *Open To Love* was only musical. *Return To Forever* was a big surprise, totally unexpected."

"And yet, when you speculate with success, things might not work out as planned. Like when Pat Metheny tried to make *American Garage* as an American production. But if you do something on a spontaneous level of reacting to something you like, you do it much more honestly. With a magazine you can plan it to be successful, because you can study all the attitudes which have to be considered, in *Zeitgeist*, in fashion or whatever. Magazines change their faces all the time. So do record companies. But I'd like to remain at least somehow away from all the negative influences, the daily idea of success, of being in with the trends. All those things don't interest me."

We are reaching an area that bothers Eicher intensely: the mass consumption of culture. There are no better places than London, or Munich, where ECM is still based, to appreciate this dilemma, and the producer is an articulate critic of a situation where every art form has attained a spurious excellence.

"Everybody seems to be successful. You go to a concert on Monday, there's a lot of people. You go on Tuesday, a lot of the same people. Everybody likes it. You go to the theatre in Munich — sold out every day. Everything's great, everybody likes it. Where's the resistance to something? Everything seems to be at the same level. I can't believe everything is good, that everything is so uncritically received these days. Is this a lack of sensitivity? There's a terrible neo-conservative movement which is embarrassing to me."

"More and more reviewers jump on the bandwagon to be in the stream of successful musicians. Less and less substantial critical reviews appear. I'd love to see critical reviews if they

weren't just cold rhetorical ideas, or discrimination, or ideological stamps or even following fascist or narcissistic tendencies — just to see something in perspective. The piles and piles of records and books reviewers have on their desk — they're not able to get the message. Now, with CDs, they just put the computer on and jump from one track to another. And that's where the superficial listening starts. Maybe we should only produce records with one track, like Arvo Pärt's *Pärtro*, which lasts for more than 70 minutes.

"In the 60s, think about the time a musician had to develop something, an idea, a sound. How many times did we have to wait until a Paul Bley came along? Now, a young musician plays an interesting note, he's hired to make a record and do a festival. He's exposed much too fast. He has no chance. And if he doesn't succeed, he's out of the window."

The complaint has become commonplace. But it's the key to Eicher's philosophy over ECM's direction. It might be strange that the man who brought the pastels of John Abercrombie, the exquisite organics of Egberto Gismonti and the cluttered roar of the Art Ensemble Of Chicago together under one logo should bridle at cultural homogeneity. Again, though, it's less the crossing of genres which is at stake, more the sapping of a music's inner strength. Eicher speaks of learning to "metaphorically look away", in order to tune out the deafening sound of so much music.

"You can't replace tone, or the breathing of notes. You can make notebooks, but if they appear on a record . . . we have done records like that too, and I can't listen to them. You can't replace interaction in art. That's what makes things move."

"I try to be resistant. I still consider our label to be able to listen to the echoes of, yes, another time. Think about the *Lamentations* recordings of Thomas Tallis. I think I hear something incredibly contemporary in there. It may have come from the Middle Ages, but it's only possible to do it today as it really is. It's created its own form and sound and language. It came out of a long, long period of writing very complex music. With this, he arrived at being as simple as he could be, simple and yet — secrets in his music are still emerging. Even though I thought I understood everything, when I looked into the music, the score looks very simple — but there are so many secrets. The same with Mozart. There is so much to find and understand, and it has incredible strength."

#### WHY AREN'T there more live recordings on ECM?

"We've done quite a lot. We did so much with Keith Jarrett, and yet quite a lot of it is unreleased. Ideally, one should be able to record without microphones. When there's a recording there's a different kind of consciousness to the musicians, and I really don't believe so much in live recordings. I'd rather be in the studio and develop something there, as live as possible. Pat Metheny's *80/81* is such an example."

"Many recordings have a lack of vitality because musicians, after a long tour, go into the studio and think they can recapture the intensity of a concert, but very often it turns out to be rather

boring. We often do recordings before a group even exists. We get the group together and then they go out on tour. The Paul Bley Group, they started with *Fragments*, where they'd never played together before. After a year, they did another LP (*The Paul Bley Group*), and it's an amazing difference. I wouldn't want to say it's better, but it's a different experience."

It's a worthwhile point, for several ECM live recordings are among the finest by the players concerned — Jarrett's *Koko Concert*, or the Art Ensemble's *Urban Bushmen*, perhaps their best record.

"I agree. But you should know there was a lot of editing. I did a recording in Japan in '79 of the *Balangong* group with Keith and Garbarek. We mixed it just a year ago, and I sent it to Keith and he didn't listen to the tape for months. Now he listened and a few days ago he called me and said, I agree, we should release it."

"It was a fantastic concert. At the time, we felt they'd done better concerts. When we both heard it again, we both felt that this was just the concert. That's sometimes how it goes. From a distance, the perception might change. Other recordings we've done, I just can't listen to. They're boring. Too much is going on with the so-called 'live' experience. A bad note is still a bad note."

PERHAPS ECM will become, in the eyes of its critics, more rarefied still. The leanings of the New Series and of "regular" ECM releases incline further away from Lester Bowie and Pat Metheny and other players seen as more red-blooded than some of Eicher's signings. He has lost Metheny and Bill Frisell to other labels; Jack DeJohnette and Steve Coleman may appear on ECM releases, but their own *Audio Visualscapes* and *Sire Die* were released elsewhere. If any of this bothers Eicher, it doesn't show. He is still trying to keep the whole catalogue in print, although he might think about trimming it down, "in two or three years".

Whatever happens, ECM is certain to maintain its isolation. Mention new age music to Eicher and he looks disgusted: "I don't know anything about it. I don't listen to it, don't know what it is. It's just another stupid stamp on music." If the market identified by Windham Hill is or was an ECM market too, Eicher simply doesn't care.

As far as this listener is concerned, if it weren't for Manfred Eicher's ECM, we wouldn't have had such masterpieces as Jan Garbarek's *Dü*, Eberhard Weber's *Yellow Fields*, Ralph Towner's *Solstis*, John Abercrombie's *Troubles*, John Surman's *Withholding Patterns* or Edward Vesala's *Laur*. It's, well, as simple as that. He has put us all in his debt for recording so many unique voices with such intense faith and sensitivity.

"We're not doing enough," muses Eicher. "I think one needs new ideas to present a record today. We just make a record and put it in a cover and present it to the audience. It might be the most honest way, but I'm not sure if we can do just that, with all this traffic around. Advertising might help, but I don't think much about that. Discussion might help. Let's say, musics which are at least talked about, among friends."

## THE CRITICS' CHOICE

\* \* \* \*

ROLL OVER harmolody, here come the avant-garde! For the first time in *Wire* history, a harmolodics-related LP has failed to win our annual critics' poll, Cecil Taylor's magnificent double *Liv At Bologna* storming through to squeeze out previous chart-toppers Ornette Coleman (in the number-two slot) and Ronald Shannon Jackson (who has to make do with fourth, 26th and 28th places). And with John Zorn, Tim Berne and Marilyn Crispell also breaching the top ten, it's been a boom year for more adventurous forms of the music.

A good year too for the independent, London-based Leo Records, with the label's leading artists Taylor and Crispell polling their highest-ever places. *Gaia* might have polled higher still had more people been able to hear it; the LP sold out within a month of release and is only being reissued – on CD – in December. A similar argument applies to Tim Berne's *Sanctified Dreams*, which CBS omitted to release in Britain until several months after its US appearance and almost too late for the *Wire* poll. Whether it's on a small label or a multi-national, it seems the music is still ridiculously hard to find.

American artists dominated the chart, taking the first 11 places; and even the two highest British entries – Dave Holland and Fred Frith – are both New York-based expatriates. But perhaps the most surprising aspect of the chart, at least in relation to British jazz, is the glaring absence of media-favourites like Courtney Pine, Loose Tubes, Human Chain and Billy Jenkins: *Wire* writers again displayed a distinct preference for more experimental sounds by voting Pinski Zoo's *Rare Breeds* the top British group LP (at 14) and also giving strong support to LPs by improvisers Russell/Butcher/Durrant, Martin Archer, Lloyd/Fowler/Garside and AMM.

With 160 LPs in all receiving votes (ten more than 1987's total), the keynote to the year's music has to be diversity. Not only in the broad spectrum of musics represented by, say, Dennis Gonzalez, Astor Piazzolla and Hans Reichel; but even within the "jazz" tradition itself, it's hard to think of more diverse parameters than those set down by Betty Carter and Zorn's *News For Lulu*, or the Jim Hall Trio and Braxton's hair-raising tributes to Monk.

There seems to be a feeling abroad that 1988 has not been a great year for LPs, but we think the top 20 or so records opposite are as strong a collection as any we can remember in recent history – every one is a must for the serious music-lover, and most of them you read about first in *Wire*. So, happy listening, and reading, in '89.

### WIRE TOP 50 LPs OF 1988

1. LIVE IN BOLOGNA Cecil Taylor Unit (*Leo*)
2. VIRGIN BEAUTY Ornette Coleman (*Portrait*)
3. SPILLAINF John Zorn (*Newsweek*)
4. STRANGE MEETING Power Tools (*Artiller*)
5. SIX MONK'S COMPOSITIONS (1987) Anthony Braxton (*Black Saint*)
6. NAMESAKE Dennis Gonzalez New Dallas Quartet (*Silkheart*)
7. LOOK WHAT I GOT! Betty Carter (*Verve*)
8. SANCTIFIED DREAMS Tim Berne (CBS)
9. GAIA Marilyn Crispell (*Leo*)
10. VERONA RAG Andrew Hill (*Soul Note*)
11. EASILY SLIP INTO ANOTHER WORLD Henry Threadgill (*Notes*)
12. TRIPPLICATE Dave Holland Trio (ECM)
13. THE TECHNOLOGY OF TEARS Fred Frith (*Rec/Ra*)
14. RARE BREEDS Pinski Zoo (*Dig Out*)
15. TANGO ZERO HOUR Astor Piazzolla (*Paragon*)
16. TIMO'S MESSAGE John Tchicai (*Black Saint*)
17. CONCEITS Russell/Butcher/Durrant (*Acta*)
18. LIVE AT BLUES ALLEY Wynton Marsalis (CBS)
19. THESE ROOMS Jim Hall Trio (*Dewey*)
20. LIVE AT CARLOS I Billy Bang Sextet (*Soul Note*)
21. NEWS FOR LULU Zorn/Lewis/Frisell (*art ART*)
22. WILD PATHWAY FAVOURITES Martin Archer (*Ladder*)
23. PRIVATE CITY John Surman (ECM)
24. LONDON BRIDGE IS BROKEN DOWN Mike & Kate Westbrook (*Venture*)
25. FIRST LINE Bob Stewart (*JMT*)
26. TEXAS Ronald Shannon Jackson (*Canopus Of Dreams*)
27. OUT HERE LIKE THIS The Leaders (*Black Saint*)
28. CASSETTE RECORDINGS '87 Last Exit (*Every*)
29. IRENE SCHWEIZER/GUNTER SOMMER (*luuk*)
30. DANCING IN THE DARK Sonny Rollins (*Milestone*)
31. THE ART OF THE DUO Lee Konitz/Albert Mangelsdorff (*Eaja*)
32. SIMPLE PLEASURES Bobby McFerrin (*Manhattan*)
33. AFRICA Pharoah Sanders (*Twelve*)
34. LOOK OUT FOR HOPE Bill Frisell Band (ECM)
35. PENTIMENTO Lloyd/Fowler/Garside (*San*)
36. LIVE IN VIENNA Cecil Taylor Unit (*Leo*)
37. THE INEXHAUSTIBLE DOCUMENT AMM (*Mantler*)
38. THE OAWN OF DACHSMAN Hans Reichel (FMP)
39. LIVE AT THE PROMS 1970 Soft Machine (*Rakker*)
40. COLOURS IN THIRTY THIRD Muhal Richard Abrams (*Black Saint*)
41. MULTIPLI Giorgio Gadini (*Soul Note*)
42. JOHNNY LIVES Pierre Dorge and New Jungle Orchestra (*Stepfabeat*)
43. DON'T STOP IT Klaus Ignatzek (*Twelve*)
44. OPEN Zbigniew Namyslowski (*Polish Jazz*)
45. PARIS BLUES Gil Evans/Steve Lacy (*Owl*)
46. INTO THE OUTLANDS SXL (*Every*)
47. THE PAUL BLEY QUARTET (ECM)
48. BLUE NOTES FOR JOHNNY Blue Notes (*Ogaw*)
49. LOVE REMAINS Robert Watson Quartet (*Red*)
50. DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME Michael Brecker (*Inspire*)

This chart was compiled from the votes of the following contributors (each person's number one LP choice is shown in brackets):

RICHARD COOK (Concerts), JACK COOKE (Irene Schweitzer/Gunter Sommer), MIKE FISH (Sacrificed Dreams), JOHN FORDHAM (Live In Bologna), ANDY HAMILTON (Open), TONY HERRINGTON (Virgin Beauty), DAVE ILIC (Spillane), STEVE LAKE (Into The Outlands), STEVE LEWIS (Triplicate), GRAHAM LOOK (Gia), HOWARD MANDEL (Paris Blues), KENNY MATHIESON (Namesake), BRIAN MORTON (Live In Bologna), STUART NICHOLSON (Live At Blues Alley), CHRIS PARKER (Tango:Zero Hour), BRIAN PRIESTLEY (Dancing In The Dark), MARK SINKER (Strange Meeting), BEN WATSON (Virgin Beauty), PHILIP WATSON (Look Out For Hope), BARRY WITHERDEN (Cassette Recordings '87)



## LATIN

1. ON THE RIGHT TRACK Sonora Ponceña (*Ima*)
2. SUENO CONTIGO José Alberto (*RMM Records*)
3. PA'LOS MAESTROS Jesús Cepeda Y Su Grupo Musical ABC (*Hijuelo Records*)
4. EL CAMINO, THE ROAD Hilton Ruiz (RCA)
5. LA EXPLOSION DEL MOMENTO Orquesta Reve (*EGREM Records*)
6. RITMO EN EL CORAZON Celia Cruz & Ray Barretto (*Fania*)
7. SOY LOCO POR TI, AMERICA Gilberto Gil (*Brazilian*)
8. 14 CANONAZOS BAILABLES Various (*Frente/Sonolux*)
9. CARABALI Carabali (*Prieto Records*)
10. SENTIMENTO NICA Various (*Tanox Records*)

Selected by Sue Steward

## BLUES

1. HOUSE PARTY NEW ORLEANS STYLE Professor Longhair (*Rounder*)
2. LIVE FROM CHICAGO Lonnie Brooks (*Alligator*)
3. THE WAY I FEEL Irma Thomas (*Rounder*)
4. DON'T HE PLAY King Curtis (*Red Lightnin'*)
5. ROUGH+HOUSET Little Ed & The Blues Imperials (*Alligator*)
6. THE GIFT Joe Louis Walker (*A&E*)
7. STILL GROOVE JUMPIN' Various (*Dotor*)
8. WHOSE MUDDY SHOES Elmore James/John Brim (*Chez*)
9. YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO Barbara Lynn (*Ichibaw*)
10. STORY OF MY LIFE Guitar Slim Jnr (*Orlans*)

Selected by Mike Atherton

## AFRICAN

1. TRADITION Kante Manfila (*Stereo*)
2. AMBUYA? Stella Chiweshe (*Globestyle*)
3. OHOA OH Nahawa Doumbia (*Syllart/Stereo*)
4. MALI MUSIC — LEGENDARY BANOS OF MALI (*Stern*)
5. CHANGE IS PAIN Mzwakhe (*Prankha/World Circuit*)
6. ASSIREM Oardia (*Globestyle*)
7. THOKOZILE Mahlatini/Mahotella Queens (*Earthworks/Virgin*)
8. SAHEL Soum Dubere & M'mah Sylla (*Triple Earth*)
9. TAXI DRIVER Jonah Moyo (*K-Ko*)
10. WANGO Brabs Maal (*Syllart/Stereo*)

Selected by Mark Sinker

## CONTEMPORARY COMPOSITION

1. ROBERT SIMPSON: STRING QUARTETS 10/11 Coull SQ (*Hypertonic*)
2. SHOSTAKOVICH/SCHULHOFF: STRING QUARTETS, ETC Edition Lockenhaus/Gidon Kremer et al (*ECM*)
3. ARTUR SCHNABEL/MICHAEL GIelen: STRING QUARTETS LaSalk SQ (*Deutsche Grammophon*)
4. ARVO PÄRT: PASSIO OMNI NOSTRI JESU CHRISTI SECUNDUM JOANINUM Helliard Ensemble (*ECM*)
5. GEORGE BENJAMIN: ORCHESTRAL WORKS London Symphony/BBC Symphony Orchestra (*Nimbus*)
6. JOHN HARLE: JOHN HARLE'S SAXOPHONE works by Woods, Bennett, Heath, Denisor, Berkeley with John Lenehan (*Hypertonic*)
7. ROBERT SIMPSON: SYMPHONY NO 9 Bournemouth SO/Handley (*Hypertonic*)
8. PETER MAXWELL DAVIES: A CELEBRATION OF SCOTLAND (*Unison Kammer*)
9. ARTHUR HONEGGER: FILM MUSIC CSR Symphony Orchestra (world premiere recording) (*Mario Polo*)
10. PETER ORKINSON: SONGCYCLES (*Centaur*)

Selected by Brian Morton

## FUSION

1. SAY WHAT YOU WANT Bob Thompson (*Intima*)
2. PARADISE CITIZENS Randy Bernstein (*Zebra*)
3. BEHIND THE SUN Clyde Criner (*RCA Noise*)
4. TAKE FOR EXAMPLE THIS Billy Childs (*Windham Hill Jazz*)
5. AND YOU KNOW THAT Kirk Whalum (*CBS*)
6. NEW YORK RENEGADES The SOS All Stars (*CMG*)
7. PICK HITS LIVE John Scofield Band (*Gramaventures*)
8. IF THIS BASS COULD ONLY TALK Stanley Clarke (*Portrait*)
9. LIVE AT THE BLUE NOTE Dave Valentine (*GRP*)
10. ILLUMINATION Elements (*RCA Noise*)

Selected by Paul Gilroy



## **cities on fire with electric guitars**

New York's Sonic Youth and Los Angeles' Savage Republic are revitalizing American rock music with their hard-core attitudes and screaming guitars. BILLY KOPP reports on the coast-to-coast cacophony as rampant discord clash by night.

Photos by GENE SPRINGER

### **II: SONIC YOUTH: lost in the s-tone**

SOME 40 years after electrification, the guitar is still *the* sound of the city. Like a junkyard compressor, it compounds great reverberating chords and discords from the city night's cacophony of casualties and pleasures. But it hasn't got from then to now without a few power failures on the way. At times the sound of the electric guitar has hung like a pall of tear gas. Recall how the pyrotechnic heatscale antics of rock/fusion players bored us all to tears. Clearly, something had to be done to restore the crackle of electricity to city music.

For a few brief exhilarating moments, British punk regenerated that crackle by stripping music down to base rhythms. Yet

because it didn't structure any genuine differences at its core, social friction could only generate enough energy to raise the punk Icarus so high before it was left treading air. It's all very well claiming physics and aerodynamics are for the birds. A little knowledge of either would have taken the music higher.

If changes in American guitar music have been less showy, their internal effects are frequently more profound, because they evade the social and concentrate their energies on the thing they can most immediately alter: the music itself. Of all the American groups on the popular fringe to emerge in the 80s, New York's Sonic Youth have gone farthest to illuminating the city night again with the kind of electric, electrifying guitar music the metropolis, in all its squalor and glory, demands.

THERE'S A song on the new Sonic Youth LP *Daydream Nation* that summarises just how well they read the tear-streaked and neon-stained city night directly into music. Called "The Wonder" it opens a loose trilogy that begins by accepting and celebrating the city's polymorphous perversity and ends in a preppy murder.

"It was originally called 'The Town And The City,'" mumbles Thurston Moore, the guitar player who sings it, during a fragmented five-way conversation including Kim Gordon (bass, vocals), Lee Ranaldo (guitar, vocals) and Steve Shelley (drums). "But Kerouac had already used the title. The way we use it, the phrase *the wonder* comes from [psychological thriller] writer James Ellroy, who uses it to express his wonderment for Los Angeles, which, for better and worse, inspires him to keep going, to get out of bed every day."

Sonic Youth realise the wonder of it all in a sleaze of ringing guitars that fall this and that side of melody, while they constantly switch back on each other. Every so often they collide, sending up sparks of overtones that combine and combust, showering the street with magnesium brightness. The song (and LP as a whole) marks a new departure for Sonic Youth. That is, their conscious effort to control the technique that makes them one of the most exciting, if erratic, live groups in the world.

Live, Sonic Youth's excitement is generated by the hectic activity in the music's overtone layer and the destructive things they're prepared to do unto their guitars to restore their capacity to ravage the listener with all manner of sensual reverberations.

The overtone - o-tone - activity is the result of guitarists Ranaldo and Moore atomising the song's harmony, each one subsequently attacking a severely restricted area of the scale while playing tag with the melody and all the while striking up o-tones that pattern and cluster in ever more unpredictable combinations. Once upon a time I'd interpreted Sonic Youth's excitement according to the level of noise they created. Rather, it is its opposite, the harmonic overload, that is responsible for its immense erotic pleasures, even as the final result is not that dissimilar in effect from that caused by the friction of noise.

All this pleasure pushed to its limits can have catastrophic consequences. The song "Eliminator Jnr" that closes Sonic Youth's city trilogy is based on the Robert Chambers preppy

murder case, in which the defence claimed the victim died accidentally during a rough sex session. "Eliminator Jnr" attempts to rewrite reality.

"It sets up a wholly alternative reality," deadpans Thurston. "If he took her to a rock concert by ZZ Top this would never have happened. Rock'n'roll is the true saviour!"

SONIC YOUTH presently stand their guitars at the intersection of the city's most vibrant musics. Everything - hardcore, speed core, artcore, hip hop - passes through here, either informing or being informed by Sonic Youth's insatiable urge to explore all the guitar's sonic possibilities. From guitar composers Rhys Chatham and Glenn Branca (with whom Moore and Ranaldo once worked) they expanded their understanding of the guitar's harmonic capacities. But where those composers' academic leanings snuffed the instrument's electric spark, Sonic Youth constructively deployed their discoveries to shatter rock's limited harmonic range.

"Because of our experience with Chatham and Branca we got a good idea what could work musically," says Lee, reclaiming the territory from NY's rarefied conservatoires. "Obviously it's an influence on how we work. But on the first LP *Confusion Is Sex* we were still using model tuning and people think of that as the noisiest. Not until later did we start thinking, ugh, this tuning sounds horrible but it sounds fine in this context."

Unlike those celebrated schools of NY avant-garde clustering round John Zorn and Bill Laswell, Sonic Youth do not descend on genres like slumming vultures (cf Zorn's current obsession with hardcore). Rather, they rise up out of the gutter with the trash their songs trawl for inspiration. The gaseous energy given off by the decaying garbage intermingles and explodes, melding together those most disparate of elements, where the best Zorn can hope for is an ugly graft of ill-fitting parts (which, of course, creates its own kind of fascination).

In the end their obsession with the city's trash, the very tendency that makes Sonic Youth look juvenile to outsiders, protects them from the more conceited sillinesses of NY's higher circle of composers. Long may they go on singing titles like "Teenage Riot" for ever!

"I guess it's kinda odd us singing 'Teenage Riot' at 30," drawls Thurston. "Then, we are called Sonic Youth and that's kinda odd too. But we handle it pretty well."

## 2: SAVAGE REPUBLIC: *Blood on the tracks*

"I USED to be a stamp collector," recalls Bruce Licher, one of Savage Republic's two surviving founders, "and one of the things that fascinated me was the way when a new regime took over a country they would cross out the old regime on its stamps and overprint the new one."

Stamps are collectors' first window on the world. Their various shapes, sizes and colours open them up to the glorious diversity of existence outside their backyard, each revealing something of its country of origin. The postage stamps Bruce Licher now

produces for Savage Republic mark the most absolute declaration of sovereign intentions yet undertaken by a group of musicians. They depict a lone arm raising the Savage Republic banner. Encoded in the banner's bold stark design are the base elements of a singular, blood-simple music. Four red stripes and a solitary palm overlaid with crescent moon and star inside an antique industrial cog signal the scimitar fanaticism of a newly bledded state, forging its future out of little more than revolutionary fervour and the obsolete technology it inherited.

Just as a hand letterpress printer is Licher's tool for obtaining the banner's direct, almost sinister qualities, so Savage Republic deploy pawnshop amps and guitars and beaten junkyard metals to overprint the sound of rock guitar with its original raw primitivism, enforcing the new regime's fundamentalist principles through the imposition of minor scale modalities.

"We had these old electric guitars and distortion boxes and used them in a very crude way," remembers Bruce. "And it was the same with the hand letterpress stuff. There's both a slickness and a crudeness to these old technologies, depending how you manipulate them."

If at first sight Savage Republic is as hostile and as impenetrable as their Islamic-influenced imagery, Licher's stamps provide the key to its unravelling. Philately gets you everywhere.

FOR SEVEN years Savage Republic's existence was America's best-kept secret. Then, no superpower likes to concede the presence of an autonomous state within its borders. Founded in an orgy of bloodletting guitar violence and bludgeoning basses at UCLA, it has so far released three LPs, a live double, a mini-LP and two singles through its own Independent Project Records and Printing Press. Up until last year they were only available here on import. In 1987, however, they raised their profile by licensing the records to Fundamental. They also undertook their first European tour, coming back a year later to make their belated British debut as a five-piece built around founding members Bruce Licher and Philip Drucker aka Jackson Del Ray. Along with Greg Grunke and Thom Fuhrmann, they play a monotonous (to the B string) 12-string guitar, conventionally tuned guitar, treble-fuzzed bass, untreated bass and metal percussion in various combinations, the whole directed by new 21-year-old drummer Bradley Laner's martial rhythms and drop-of-a-beat predilection for improvisation.

Live or on record, their music is defined by simple tolling guitar figures, each single-mindedly pursuing its own path across the emptiness, one note, one foot at a time. Theirs could be a soundtrack for Mao's Long March, a lunatic act of faith of such heroic proportions it galvanises the revolutionary fervour of the landmass and peoples it traverses.

Each marcher is locked in his own thoughts en route to the ever-receding horizon. And just when it seems likely they'll never get there, their respective paths cross to produce a tremendous morricone-d chord that lifts them over the last rise and sends them running down the slope to victory.

Savage Republic's marching music is a fabulous feat of endurance, variously stoic, trancelike and elating. Their titles tell all: "Mobilisation", "March Or Die", "Exodus", "Procession", "Trudge", "Trek", "Siege", "Assembly", "Year Of Exile" . . . If rock is usually cars and guitars, Savage Republic are deserters from the cause. They are the music's first dromomanics — compulsive walkers. Walk don't run, and then *Isha'Allah*, Godspeed. Their largely instrumental long marches bring out the best in Savage Republic; obduracy, in a word.

"I think it works better when we keep it simple, best when we realise our limitations," posits Greg Grunke. "We can't play solos like Eddie Van Halen. That each of us has the ability to play very simple stuff has led to an ensemble way of playing. We work together a combination of simple patterns, rhythm and melody kinda intertwined so you can't say which element is more or less important."

But it's not all foot-in-mao disease. Elsewhere, Savage Republic evoke the nomad's land where the city fizzles out in the desert scrub ("Spice Fields"). Then there's the Islam imagery and Middle Eastern musical motifs, which their American audiences find so unsettling in light of the hostage crisis.

"We work a lot of minor scales, minor modes," explains Thom Fuhrmann. "Depending on the rhythmical emphasis it could sound Arabic, Irish folksy or Greek. There are certain elements common to all. We just like to compound drones, repetitions and interlocking patterns into a greater whole."

If their great strength is their evocative, enduring instrumentals, which at first suspend time and then choreograph it in a manner contemporary composers like latterday Reich can only snooze about, they have also written some fine songs which dramatise the peculiar malaise corroding the American spirit. A favourite is the unforgettable hardcore slogan "*You have come to teach but we have come to eat*" from the first LP *Tragic Figures*. But others aspire to something higher, something approaching hardboiled poetry, like Philip Drucker's "Film Noir". Its lyric brilliantly diagnoses the loneliness of those conscripted to professions of violence: "*When danger calls I have to answer/I walk the streets like a human canter/There's a side of me I hope you never see . . .*"

"It was about the social requirements of living in LA and the US," grins Drucker, who also works in the intermittently excellent ethnic forgers 17 Pygmies. "About the people left out in the cold by an American detective attitude. In Europe detectives deduce the answer. In the States the guy goes in and beats it out of you. The lyric tries to get down that attitude. I should have dedicated it to Mickey Spillane. You have to understand that I think he's a total moron, a racist, sexist pig. He's also the seventh most popular author in America."

When you look at America from that angle, Savage Republic's desire for absolute autonomy makes even more sense. Furtled in their own flag, minting their own stamps, wrapped in sovereignty's trappings, Savage Republic bring a whole new meaning to the word independent. They're the first American group ever to cede from the Union.



**SAVAGE REPUBLIC** *select discography*

*Tropic Fugue* LP (Independent Project/Fundamental)  
"Film Noir" 7" (Independent Project)  
*Trade* maxi-LP (Play It Again Sam Belgian import)  
*Creamsicle* LP (Independent Project/Fundamental)  
*Jazzaberry* LP (Independent Project/Fundamental)

**SONIC YOUTH** *select discography*

*Confusion Is Sex* LP (Neutral US import)  
*Bad Moon Rising* LP (Blast First)  
"Flower" 12" (Blast First)  
*EVOL* LP (Blast First)  
*Daydream Nation* double LP (Blast First)  
Sonic Death early live recordings cassette/CD (Blast First)  
"Into The Groove(y)", Ciccone Youth 12" (SST/Blast First)  
Forthcoming, a collaboration between Thurston Moore and the humping horns of  
Boberamagus (Forced Exposure)



Still misunderstood

and neglected,

the man who took

jazz saxophone to

its furthest limits

awaits a new

appreciation.

Richard Cook offers

a personal view.

Photograph

by Val Wilmer.

*my name is albert ayler*

I'VE BEEN wondering lately if anyone listens to Albert Ayler any more. Eighteen years after his death, the man who, more than anyone else, shocked and dishevelled the jazz of his time has become antique. If Ayler came along today, his currency would be, if not exactly commonplace, no more sonically disturbing than many of today's extremists.

Borbetomagus explore the edges of Ayler's art with a relentlessness that might have fazed Albert himself. Last Exit would just drown him out. Yet no saxophone screamers or noise merchants have truly mastered Albert Ayler. He organised his music in forms and emotions which, for their candour and determination, have never been surpassed. But it's no use trying to sell Ayler as a sensation. In his dark, mysterious recordings, he is pursuing a different goal.

People who heard him remember Ayler with a mixture of affection and sadness. Anyone who lived through the new jazz of the 60s tends to look back on it with nostalgia, as they do on everything else that happened in that decade. The outrage and bewilderment which once accompanied that music have mellowed (the alcohol turning to sugar, perhaps).

Ayler has left little to remember him by, though. His records

were comparatively few in number, and fewer still remain available. His masterpieces for the New York ESP label have been in and out of the catalogue, although it's valuable that at least *Spiritual Unity* is once again being distributed. John Coltrane, who admired Ayler enough to incorporate elements of the younger man's music into his own playing, is more ubiquitous than ever; Cecil Taylor is an honoured and still vitally creative force; Ornette Coleman is a grandmaster lionised by disciples, pushing onward with his fusions; Eric Dolphy has taken a posthumous place as an instrumental virtuoso. The great Black masters of the avant-garde have received at least something like their due. Albert Ayler remains on the fringes, a shadowy name more spoken of than listened to, and not much spoken of at that. Even critics, who once raged over the properties of Ayler's music, have left him alone. He is scarcely perceived as an influence. His time has gone, and Ayler has almost gone with it.

It's not that history has been rewritten. It's that Ayler's farce has been rationalised away into a kind of dead zone. He was bad for jazz on too many levels to have survived as a primary agent. Even in his own lifetime, when the livid power of his early music led him nowhere in either critical or commercial terms, Ayler squared off his most radical tendencies. He came in hard and fast, and was broken quickly as a result. Cecil Taylor has proved to be as radical as Ayler, but his music grew more slowly and was in any case delivered in less confrontational terms.

Ayler was unprecedented in the manner of his music. At the time of his first (official) recordings in 1963, jazz had gone as far afield as Taylor's "D Triad, That's What", Coltrane and Dolphy's "Africa" and Coleman's "Free Jazz" — imposing statements, but all comparatively digestible to adventurous contemporary listeners. *My Name Is Albert Ayler*, and the first records he made in New York, marched ahead of all of these. There is a case for saying that we've moved no further since.

**A YLER** WAS already 27 when his first New York recordings were made. He was born in Cleveland, Ohio in 1936, and like so many of his generation of musicians he served a rhythm and blues apprenticeship. His crucial association in the 50s was with Little Walter's band: Walter Jacobs played harmonica in a brutal, cleaving style that was not so different from Ayler's saxophone multiphonics (Ayler played alto then, and switched to tenor while in the army in 1958). He built his early reputation in Europe, following his discharge, having found little appreciation in the US for his gathering conception. *My Name Is Albert Ayler* was recorded in Denmark, a chaotic assemblage of standards and one free piece, culminating in an unholy rendition of "Summertime". The song becomes an extravagant, blaring music, the saxophone humping up and down over the uncomprehending rhythm players.

This first session sounds like a prelude to something awesome. Ayler's music burst in 1964. His records from that year are transfixing in their power and intensity. But it's a personal, not an impossible music. "We play folk tunes from all over the world, like very, very old tunes," he said, much later. Seeking

the source of Ayler's music was compulsory activity: it's as though people couldn't believe a man had the gall to play the way he did, so they had to determine his previous incarnations. Ayler was detected in pygmy music, in New Orleans dirges, in gospel hollers and raw country blues; his bands were compared to old marching bands, ancient European folk ensembles, military brass sections. One could make a case for all of these, but it obscures the fact of Ayler himself, a middle-class black who played an excellent golf game but had the street smarts to be friendly with his neighbourhood hustlers. Driven with missionary fervour, he seemed ready to overthrow the notion of the jazz tradition. The music wasn't some kind of folk accident but the product of a single, furious inspiration.

What did this inspiration sound like? The records remain a stunning experience. The greatest of them might be *Spiritual Unity*, made with Gary Peacock (bass) and Sunny Murray (drums), released by ESP. Allegedly, the engineer set the tapes rolling and fled the studio when he heard the music begin. Everything about the record is extraordinary. The sleeve, an illustration by Howard Bernstein, depicts a naked protean figure cradling a saxophone. On the other side, bleached portraits of the players are placed between the forks of the symbol Y, "the rising spirit of man". A booklet given away with the first copies of the record includes a commentary by Paul Haines, the poet best known for his libretto to *Escalator Over The Hill*. He calls Ayler's sound "that of a diseased pearl".

The first sound on the record is a shock: the tenor saxophone blurring out the beginning of a melody line, out of a clear pitch, before bass and drums fall in beside it. "Ghosts" was Ayler's most enduring melody, and he played it for the rest of his career. There are two versions on *Spiritual Unity*, opening and closing the record. The theme itself has the simple appeal of a rhyme: it sounds as though it might have been composed on a bugle, as many of Ayler's later themes also suggest. But from there the trio move into dimensions of vast complexity.

Ayler's solos assault a passive listener. Everything in his sound is extreme: the mountainous volume, suddenly feathering off into small crying sounds, the tone he gets, cracked from the inside, touching all the false registers of the horn, shrill and hoarse at the top, bottoming out into a cavernous low honk; the phrases blasted out until his lungs are empty. In the second version, "Ghosts" becomes an exorcism of something unnameable in the saxophonist's music. The terror in this performance lies in the way an exultant if ominous mood is annihilated by Ayler's solo, a marathon of split tones, bellowing cries and herculean crescendos. He hammers on and on. It isn't a quest for fulfilment, like Coltrane's music. These are the throes of something already achieved. Something fantastic seems to fly out of the music, a moment of collective hysteria that subsides as the tenor dies out.

Albert Ayler isn't the only remarkable thing about *Spiritual Unity*. The record also marks the end of the jazz rhythm section. Sunny Murray dispenses with timekeeping and plays a continuous, flashing line of cymbals and tapping snare interruptions

- gently, almost wispily, creating an amazing contrast to the Leviathan weight of Ayler. Gary Peacock follows his own line, a blur in the middle, roving between the two measures and offering his own dense form of counterpoint.

It's at once a complete ensemble music and a vehicle for a gigantic personality. "The Wizard" and "Spirits" are, basically, more of the same, although the internal logic of "Spirits" will prove that Ayler wasn't charging randomly into his music. There is a marvellous moment about half-way through the first "Ghosts", when the trio seem to pause for an instant before collectively gathering themselves and moving onward.

AYLER'S MUSIC receives its most striking portrayal here, and in the companion records *Witches And Devils*, *Vibrations* (alias *Ghosts*), and *The Hilversum Session*, the latter two involving Don Cherry as a fool who stands slightly apart from Ayler, offering his own, raised-eyebrow improvisations to the strident sounds around him. "Mothers", from *Vibrations*, is a stark dirge which none of Ayler's critics could take seriously: played remorselessly straight, the saxophonist using a vibrato that shivers like a fevered body, it points towards his next direction.

In 1965, Ayler formed a group with his brother Don on trumpet and Charles Tyner on alto sax. The principal change came in the source material, which seemed to come from some archive of dusty old tunes. Sometimes the group will just play the melodies, as belligerent, blustering recitalists: the vernacular was weirdly out of step with the other jazz in Ayler's hearing, and only he could have done it. *Bells*, released as a one-sided record for ESP, is a compelling example of this group in concert. Ayler had already attempted a major work with other horns in the massive *New York Ear And Eye Control*, commissioned for a film by moviemaker Michael Snow. Ayler asserts himself through the near-chaos by force of personality. In the film, where the soundtrack suddenly booms in after several minutes of silence, the music accompanies a series of static images until the closing sequence, where Snow films each member of the group talking in close-up while their playing thunders on.

As powerful as the music of 1965-66 was, with the European tour which included the violinist Michael Sampson, and an American recording with the young Ronald Shannon Jackson, the impact of Ayler's earlier music had already begun to dissipate. Earlier! Only two years separates *Spiritual Unity* from the concerts in *Lorrach/Paris 1966*. In that period, with Coleman and Taylor largely absent from the studios, much debate centred on Albert Ayler. But it was going on in a tiny margin of the music. Unlike John Coltrane, who had studied and learned from Albert's manner, Ayler was struggling as much as any stranded bebopper under the onslaught of rock.

That may account for the way his music turned, a notorious change at the time, but one which now seems less amazing, given the ongoing fusions of the last two decades. *New Grass* and its following music stuck him with what Ian Carr calls "a nice little blues/gospel backing band". The music's brief tracks and vocals slip past harmlessly. But when you reflect on what the

same man was doing a few years before, it seems absurd.

IT'S A long time ago now. Albert Ayler's death in February 1970 seems to have been at his own hand, his body found floating in the Hudson River. As swiftly as his career ran its course, so did his philosophy move towards the end. "It's not about notes any more, it's about feelings," he said at the beginning. "All my music is purely music of love." "I really meditate on the universal thoughts, I can't be restricted to an earthly plane." "I must communicate with their spirit that comes within the soul and the heart." "I saw in a vision the new Earth built by God coming out of heaven."

There's danger in seeing him as a mystic, as mystifying as his music could be. Ronald Shannon Jackson remembers him carrying an aura around with him, an indefinite sense of otherness. But if we see him as some kind of Black shaman, a man "speaking in tongues", as Nat Henroff described Coltrane and Sanders, we marginalise him again, into the eccentric, exotic limbo which too much difficult Black music has been conveniently sent to.

How else to appreciate him? As harbinger of revolutionary anger? As much as Ayler embodies the zeal of the new jazz of the 60s, he is set apart from most of his contemporaries by the lonely force of his vision. The easy interpretation of his music is "rage", a description often used by such different personalities as John Coltrane and Archie Shepp. But the message of *Spiritual Unity* isn't so easily expelled. It's a turmoil of communications.

The vividness of that music is undiminished. People have screamed through saxophones ever since without getting to the grain of Ayler's heart and mind. He was the most pragmatic of jazz artists: "Never try to figure out what happens, because you will never get the true message." That is rashly taken advice, but at one level it suggests a way to understand Ayler's music. Ever since he first appeared, people have tried to *explain him away*. Maybe he does reach back into the oldest, deepest roots of the music. But he gathered and expressed those echoes with a force and purpose which were and are unswervingly modern. It has always been held against him. He deliberately revived nothing of the jazz past; maybe that's why, in this revivalist era, he is slipping further into neglect, his challenge unanswered.

## RECORDS

- My Name Is Albert Ayler (*Fantasy*)
- Spiritual Unity (*ESP*)
- New York Ear And Eye Control (*ESP*)
- Witches And Devils (*Arista Freedowm*)
- The Hilversum Session (*Omnian*)
- Spirits Rejoice (*ESP*)
- Bells (*ESP*)
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- In Greenwich Village (*Impulse*)
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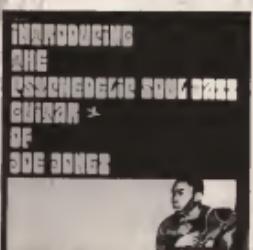
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**CECIL TAYLOR UNIT****LIVE IN VIENNA**

(Leo LR 408/409)

Recorded Vienna, 7 November 1987.

*Live In Vienna A, B, C, D.*

Carlos Ward (reeds), Cecil Taylor (p), William Parker (b), Leroy Jenkins (vn), Thurman Barker (marimba, d, v).

**T**HIS RELEASE of this set marks the end of a magnificent year for Cecil Taylor. The German festival, the *Live In Bologna* set, the solo work, the duos with Tony Oxley, and now this second concert album: Cecil is on a roll. It's worth saying again that all this has been achieved without any slackening of his muse, without any lessening of fire. The four sides of *Live In Vienna* are as volatile and multifarious as any of his works over the past 20 years – and probably more purposeful and fully realised than most.

As usual, it's a continuous performance, ebbing through four long sides until the closing encore. The primary impression is always energy, even in the kind of intense repose which fills the "quieter" parts, but it's better to point to the contrasting patterns of the set. This might not be Taylor's ideal group. Thurman Barker is a colourist rather than an elemental force, and Shannon Jackson and Cyrille remain the pianist's finest drummers. Carlos Ward has some beautiful moments – his flute works unexpectedly well – without truly challenging memories of Jimmy Lyons.

Leroy Jenkins, though, is superb, and acts as Lyons' real replacement. He has the same wounded aristocratic cry, and touches a deeper melodic root than Ward can find. Makes you regret that he's so seldom found a useful context since the demise of the Revolutionary Ensemble. Parker, too, has matured into a player of great resource, fulfilling an almost impossible task – of extending Cecil's left hand.

Taylor himself shoulders every part of the music. The recording is less than ideal, giving us only a part of the enormous world he builds around himself, but there is still so much to hear and experience in what he plays. As a companion piece to *Bologna*, the music sets its own timetable, its own sense of dynamics and light and shade. Both concerts are pieces of a vision that now seems to stretch in two endless directions – from the cluttered, chattering

world of Taylor's jazz past, to the open vista which is now his future.

MIKE FISH

**LONDON JAZZ COMPOSERS****ORCHESTRA****ZURICH CONCERTS**

(Intakt 004/005)

Recorded: Zurich, 11 November 1987

*Polyphony*.

Henry Lowther, Jon Corbett (r), Marc Chang (c); Paul Rutherford, Radu Malfatti, Alan Tomlinson (tb); Trevor Watts, Evan Parker, Pete McPhail, Simon Picard, Paul Dunmall (reed); Howard Riley (p), Steve Wick (ub); Phil Wachmann (vn); Barry Guy, Bare Phillips (b); Paul Lydon (d).

Recorded: Zurich, 27 March 1988

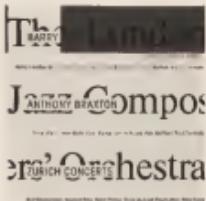
*Composseur 135 (+41, 62, 96), Composseur 136 (+96); Composseur 108B (+46, 96), Composseur 134 (+96)*

As above except Dave Holland (b) replaces Phillips, add Tony Oxley (d); Anthony Braxton (director).

and amplify the music; as a piece of timing, it's ingeniously composed. The most vivid improvisation is probably Phil Wachmann's, a sombre rainbow of electric violin tones, which leads towards a skirling finale, hypnotic in its dying textures. Guy should be proud of the structure and its intense performance.

In comparison, Braxton's pieces seem diffuse. Here, surprisingly, the Orchestra sometimes overpowers the composer. "135 (+41, 63, 96)" is a marvellous piece, unfolding into a riff-like stomp with thrilling cameos for Pete McPhail, Marc Chang and Trevor Watts, but "136 (+96)" makes the Orchestra sound nervous and fragile, and "134 (+96)" seems shapeless until Evan Parker's tenor solo fuses the component parts. Yet even when the overall impression falters, there is so much fine playing to hear that it's impossible to be bored. As much faith as Guy invests in his older colleagues, there are equally imposing bursts from Simon Picard, Pete McPhail and Paul Dunmall. A tremendous record.

RICHARD COOK

**JAN GARBAREK****LEGEND OF THE SEVEN DREAMS**  
(ECM 1381)

Recorded Oslo, July 1988.

*Hi Come From The North, Anchors, The Song Must, Tongue Of Secrets, Brother Wind; It's Name Is Secret Road, Secret Word, Vay Carrando, Mirror Stone*.  
Garbarek (ss, ts, fl); Rainer Bruninghaus (ky); Eberhard Weber (tb); Nana Vasconcelos (perc, v).

**T**HE LPO is the sort of enterprise that first makes you think of size, weight and numbers. Just getting the orchestra together, securing engagements and organising the music seems achievement enough on its own, never mind the purely musical results. But a record can only measure the sounds created. *Zurich Concerts* must have been memorable to attend; we're lucky that they were recorded too.

"Polyphony", though less substantial in duration (37 as opposed to 57 minutes), is a superior vehicle to the Braxton repertoire, perhaps because of the custom-built manoeuvres of Barry Guy's piece. Although both sets seem episodic at first, it's clear that Guy's composition is the more suitably conceived work. It's a canvas full of dark low tones – basses and trombones dominate the playing – with the full ensemble moving in to brighten

in the (limited) debate surrounding "The ECM Sound" and its archetype Jan Garbarek, the antagonists tend to favour the tyrannical Style Over Content line. Criticising it as being too self-consciously mystical, they sneer at Garbarek's as a New Age aesthetic – meaningless and contrived. Unfortunately, titles such as *Legend Of The Seven Dreams*, and offshoots like "Mirror Stone" and "It's Name Is Secret Road", do little to avoid compliance with such assertions. The latter, for example, is a Disneyland of owl-hooting forest flutes – it fails because it relies on effect alone.

Yet to the apologists, to which I firmly belong, Garbarek's music stands as one of the great contributions to jazz. His extraordinary, penetrating, imploring timbre is as individual and influential as a Coltrane, an Ayler or a Sanborn. At his best, Garbarek speaks to us in a timeless, elemental language. Twists of emphasis make it haunting, melancholic,

exultant. Almost no other music I know evokes such vivid imagery.

While not radically different from his last three or four releases, this new album extends that achievement; presenting the saxophonist in a variety of solo, trio and quartet settings. The full group is the one Garbarek is currently touring. As always, the most successful compositions are those such as "Brother Wind" and "He Comes From The North"; tracks on which he combines proud, epic melodies with atmospheres loose and organic. And "Brother Wind", as with "Voy Cantando", sees Garbarek unveil new sensibilities. Using the resonant drums he employed on *All This Born With Wings*, and with Brunninghaus favouring harpsichord-like settings, Garbarek offers triumphant, medieval landscapes; travels to pageants and banquet halls.

On the remaining tracks he is more (characteristically) austere. "Tongue Of Secrets", for example, one of the quarter performances, is a slow, watery affair — a murky exploration.

No landmark in his prodigious recording career, this is still a Legend at once dark and illuminating, meditative and extrovert. Like all great art, Garbarek's music beguiles and transports us.

PHILIP WATSON

#### BETTY CARTER

#### LOOK WHAT I GOT!

(Verve 835 661-1)

Recorded New York, probably early 1988

*Look What I Got!, That Sunday, That Summer, The Man I Love, All I Got, Just Like The Music (Tours), Imaginative, Mr Gentleman (Singer To Tight), Make It Last, The Good Life.*

Carter (vcl); Benny Green or Stephen Scott (p), Michael Bowie or Ira Coleman (b), Winard Harper, Lewis Nash or Troy Davis (d); Don Braden (ts) on *That Sunday, That Summer, The Man I Love, Just Like The Music and The Good Life*.

*Look What I Got!* is Betty Carter's first album for a major recording company since *Now It's My Turn* for Roulette in 1976. In between time she was forced to record on her own label, Bet-Car Productions, which captured her in brilliant form on *The Audience And Betty Carter* — the double-album which marks the high-water-spot in Carter's recording career to date and sets the standard by which other contemporary jazz vocal albums are measured.

If *Look What I Got!* does not aspire to the heights of *The Audience* then it's certainly not because of Carter's singing, or — as has

happened in the past — a slightly maudlin choice of material, but because the rhythm section fail to deliver the knockout punch. Clearly, as can be seen from the personnel listing, the group is in transition and the rhythmic strength that comes through rehearsal and performance remains fractionally beyond their reach on most of the album. Carter, however, consistently delivers, enveloping her material into intensely personal statements which confirm the growing critical consensus that she is now the foremost singer in jazz.

Neither an interpreter of the American Popular Song in the jazz idiom (as Ella Fitzgerald) nor a singer whose style is an exposition of technique (like Sarah Vaughan), Betty Carter is wholeheartedly committed to the jazz *art per se*. Wholly original, she is able

on "Look What I Got!"; her use of melismatics, bending and fading notes on "Mr Gentleman" and "The Good Life" and her scat singing on "All I Got" are carefully paced for maximum impact, sounding at times like abstract arabesques.

STUART NICHOLSON

#### ARVO PÄRT

#### PASSIO DOMINI NOSTRI JESU CHRISTI SECUNDUM JOANNEM

(ECM New Series 1370 837 109 1 [LP] 2 [CD])

Recorded London, March 1988.

Michael George (bass) — Jesus; John Potter (tenor) — Pilate; Lynne Dawson (sop). David James (c-tenor), Rogers Covey-Crump (tenor); Gordon Jones (baritone) — Evangelist Quartet; Elizabeth Layton (vn), Melinda Maxwell (ob), Elizabeth Wilson (clo), Catherine Duckett (bsn), Christopher Bowen-Broadbent (org). Hilliard Ensemble/Western Wind Chamber Choir Paul Hillier (cond).

If Arvo Pärt's reputation to date has to rest on his *St John Passion*, then it is on as firm a foundation as the composer's faith and musical vision and as the musicianship that has brought them both to life.

St John's Gospel is the most wholly mystical of the four and just as Matthew was the "obvious" choice for Pasolini's sceptical/respectful film, Mark for Bach's great edifice, so John is the perfect vehicle for Pärt's visionary imagination. The *Passion* is without question one of the foremost sacred works of the century, falling in alongside (but less worldly than) Messiaen's *Nativité Du Seigneur* and *Et Exaudi Resurrectionem Mortuorum* and (for my ungodly money) John Taverner's Orthodox Vigil Service. The Orthodox Church (in which the Estonian Pärt has his, deeper, roots) has retained its character without schism or latitudinarianism or "modernism" for 1200 years. Pärt makes its traditions relevant to a world still poised uneasily between GULAG and glamor.

The Evangelist's narrative is carried by a quartet of voices in beautifully suspended harmonies; the division of this part may well be intended to suggest the extent to which the Gospel story is contingent on individual — and therefore partial — encounters with an experience itself balanced between the human and the ineffable. There is a certain genius (though undoubtedly explicable by reference to cantorial tradition) in assigning Jesus to the bass and



to impose herself on her material in a way that few singers achieve, her creativity matching the finest instrumentalists in jazz. Her daring deviations from the familiar contours of "That Sunday, That Summer", "The Man I Love" and "The Good Life" extend their boundaries via her own unique process of creative distortion. Like images glimpsed in a hall of mirrors their outline remains familiar, but they are refracted this way and that by her astute musical imagination.

She chooses to sing in keys that are slightly low for her range so that on "All I Got", "The Good Life" and "Imagination" she gradually uncoils into the upper register, swooping and soaring like a high-wire act. Throughout, her musical choices are dramatic and uncaringly right: hitting a note flat and squeezing it into reuse and creating an almost unbearable tension

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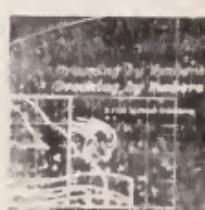
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Pontius Pilate to an insinuating tenor. The Agony is all the more profound for the absence of shrillness.

The tempi throughout are those of Haydn's *Seven Last Words* [utterances] of Christ From The Cross, seldom accelerating above a stately *andante*. Part's minimalist leanings, or, more accurately, his "tintinnabulist" method is more clearly effective at such speeds and the Gospel text provides an almost ideal fusion of means and method.

This is a work of the profoundest imagination and it is difficult to exaggerate its importance, either as a musical or a cultural-historical artefact. As to its religious underpinning, I may not be saved, but for 70 minutes I'm convinced.

BRIAN MORTON

#### VARIOUS

#### MADE IN SHEFFIELD — THE SHEFFIELD JAZZ ALBUM

#### (HJ) Records HJ001

Recorded Sheffield, August/September 1988

*A Foggy Day, Round Midnight*.

Paul Reid (p)

*Hypoplasm, Sjord*.

Quf: Mick Beck (ts), John Quannby (ky), Barry Harden (b), Dee Boyle (d).

*I Dream Of, Safe Sex*.

Big Sun: Dave Blackmore (as), Phil Rowland (t);

Pete Rosser (p); Barry Harden (b), Sean Randle (d); *Bonerville Blues*.

Fred "TheLousious" Baker (b).

*Perseverance*

Blind Venetians: Steve Brighton (as), Bill Sutton (ky), John Pradeaux (b), Marcos-Lopez Iglesias (d); *Cymbalos*.

Troska: Julia Mills (ss), Jude Sucker (p), Julia Walkingtree (dr), Lisa Bayliss (d); *Sister Moments*.

Hornweb: Martin Archer (ss), Derek Saw (as), Pete Lyons (ts), Vic Middleton (ba).

THE TERM "jazz" is double-edged. Useful when arguing the importance of Afro-America for today's music (rock, disco, film-soundtracks, avant-garde improvisation and electronics all rely on jazz), it is in itself no guarantee of relevance. This showcase for "jazz in Sheffield" hints at some new directions, but the padding is enough to make you regret having admitted an interest in jazz in the first place. I mean, I love John Coltrane — but do I have to like Weather Report?

Paul Reid's solo piano is dexterous and impressively clean, combining ragtime flourishes, Oscar Peterson's classical swoops, stride and Monk-derived runs, dissonant num-

bles and chirrupings out of Cecil Taylor. Perhaps Reid has sussed the name of the game in supplying these two sharp samplers: he has got the chops, so the next questions concern musical direction, and that means catching him live.

Quf seem to be attempting the cartoon-style transitions of American improvisation — except that no one has told the rhythm section, who are still mired in lunchtime jazz-rock. Insufficient abruptness in the juxtapositions results in medley, not collage — the twists and turns become merely academic. Mick Beck's delirious tenor surfaces tantalisingly in "Hepoplasma" — again, live performance promises more.

Troska's "Symbols" is a skipping, whimsical vehicle for Julia Mills' soprano; but when the bass walks she does not get the required strut.



It is pleasantly free of gilded professionalism but that is not enough. The sumptuous ambience applied to Fred Baker's bass solo cannot conceal its roots in the careless 12-bar of the blues-boom. Big Sun are expansive Euro-Jazz (tunes which open up like a yawn); "sensitive" cymbal-raps tick off the beat, sax and trumper coo lovingly and the tunes have all the two memorability of radio-jingles. The Blind Venetians had me screaming for mercy: jazz-funk as the resort of musicians with nothing to say.

The saving grace of this compilation is the Hornweb track, pointing to the creativity of the "other" Sheffield (Footpockets, Wire Assembly, Charlie Collins' Earth Ensemble). Sounds construct the form rather than decorate a wished-for ideal. Live, Oliver Nelson's "Stolen Moments" is used by Hornweb as an

adrenalin-fuelled introduction, a punk starburst: here it is calm, echoing the organ's beauty but losing its rhythmic thrust. The contrast between Vic Middleton's steady baritone and Martin Archer's piping soprano is all Hornweb, though. At the centre, four voices maintain a level-headed conversation. This achieves a touch of the vertigo caused by Ornette Coleman's doubling-up of instruments and, surprisingly, does not sound like jazz — which, in this context (sad to say), is a relief.

BEN WATSON

#### KRONOS QUARTET

#### WINTER WAS HARD

(Nonesuch 979 181-1)

Recorded: San Francisco, September 1987 and January 1988 and Massachusetts, November 1987

Audie Sallinen: *Winter Was Hard*, Op. 29; Terry Riley: *Half-Wolf Dances Mad In Moonlight*, Arvo

Part: *Feast*; Anton Webern: *Six Bagatelles*, Op. 9;

John Zorn: *Forbidden Fruit*; John Lurie: *Bella By Candlelight*; Astor Piazzolla: *Four For Tango*; Alfred

Schnitke: *Quartet No. 3*; Samuel Barber: *Adagio*;

Trad: Kronos: *A Door Is Ajar*

David Harrington (vn); John Sherba (vn); Hank

Dutt (vla); Joan Jeanrenaud (clo).

"KRONOS MUSIC" is what Kronos play, says David Harrington (interview in *WIRE* 41). The implied hermeticism here means simply that they've come up with a striking programme which shows that contemporary chamber music isn't just for musicologists. No Bartók this time (unlike *White Man Sleeps* released a year ago), but since he set the agenda for 20th-century string-quartet writing, it's not surprising his influence is still felt here.

It's felt even in the folksy penumbras of Terry Riley's catchy "Half-Wolf Dances" from *Snowy Dinner For Four*, written for Kronos. But the heavyweight work, and an aspiring addition to the Beethoven-Bartók tradition, is Alfred Schnittke's *Quartet No. 3*. Kronos are doing a lot to popularise his work in the West, and the committed performance they give here communicates a rare emotional intensity. In a similar austere tonal idiom to the bleak late quartets of his mentor Shostakovich, Schnittke's 1983 *Quartet* still contrives to say more about life than death. Samuel Barber's haunting "Adagio" which follows (better known in the composer's orchestration for strings) is a "popular classic" by comparison.

The group's role as collaborators and not just interpreters brings forth "Forbidden Fruit", first heard on John Zorn's album

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Boogie-woogie, an archaic but exhilarating form of piano music dating from the turn of the century, was first played by black American pianists in barrel houses and joints serving as places of entertainment for the black labour force working in the lumber and railway construction industries of the Deep South. Later, it was to be heard at rent parties in Chicago, buffet flats in Saint Louis, and in other urban centres where there was a sizeable, economically depressed black population. The piano style gained international recognition when it moved from the ghetto to the Cafe Society nightclubs of New York in the late 1930s. During the 1940s, boogie-woogie became a USA-wide craze, after being taken up enthusiastically by the period's popular songwriters, who added lyrics to its pounding rhythms. Leaders of swing bands also featured at least one novelty boogie

number in their repertoires. Such exposure and the consequent dilution of its exciting qualities led to an inevitable decline of public interest, until now it is played only by a dedicated group of pianists spread across Europe and the USA.

*A Left Hand Like God* chronicles, for the first time, this stimulating musical style from "Pinetop's Boogie-woogie" through "Honky Tonk Train Blues" to the present day, including detailed examinations of all the main practitioners, from the big three (Albert Ammons, Pete Johnson and Meade Lux Lewis) through Jimmy Yancey to Axel Zwingenberger.

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A STUDY OF BOOGIE-WOOGIE



**Peter Silvester**



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**Spillane.** A collage of "great moments in the history of the string quartet" (Mozart, Beethoven's *Grande Fugue*, Bartók) intercut with scribblings, scratchings and screechings plus a Japanese voice, it's curiously affecting. But Kronos's involvement with the "Next Wave" doesn't rule out a nostalgic glimpse of the serial "mainstream", and here Webern's fragmentary *Bagatelles* are made to carry the great expressive burden intended by the ext- (?)Romantic.

It's hard, really, to pick a favourite in this cornucopia of chamber music. Piazzolla's delightful "Tango" shows that the dance isn't just something from *Casablanca*. But the piece that perhaps echoes the longest is Arvo Pärt's *Fratres*. Its deceptively simple lines show that the miraculous stillness of that composer's *Cantus In Memorian Benjamin Britten* is (just) repeatable. In it, Kronos (= "chronos") almost stands still.

ANDY HAMILTON

## THE HONKIES

### HONKATTACK

#### (Bop Cassettes BIP 202)

*Drop Jazz; All Soul Day; The Pig And The Bird, Hushabye; Tribute To Lawrence D; Maggy, The Greatest Stranger; Chaconne Little; Don't Cry, Honkattack 123; Albert.*

Andy Diagram (t), Caroline Knoblauch, Kathy Hulme (ox), R.E. Harrison (d)

HOW MANY of the new generation of British jazz musicians show signs of being influenced by any music recorded after 1964? Andy Sheppard? Tommy Chase, perhaps? Granted, Courtney Pine is on to something approaching contemporaneity thanks to being the star name on the session sheets of nine out of ten current British solo productions, but even on a track like Mica Paris' "My Only Temptation" he still ends up sounding like John Coltrane on a bad day.

As far as I can ascertain, The Honkies don't sound much like John Coltrane on any kind of day. What they do sound like, maybe, is a cross between Albert Ayler's 1965 *Spirits Rejoice* LP and Roscoe Mitchell's Sound Sextet circa 1966. By my reckoning that puts them on average at least 12 months ahead of the rest of the field, which, I hasten to add, is not so much a comment on the blazingly innovative nature of The Honkies' music, more a tawdry reflection on the dilapidated state of the opposition.

There seems to be a stack of these kind of groups about right now. You know the type. They tend towards "unconventional" line-ups, trumpet, two reeds and a drummer, say; have at least one member with the dress sense of Harpo Marx and another who's written a thesis on The Dialectic Influence on 20th Century Composition; they all do free-jazz versions of "classic" pop songs using such indispensable aids to musical expression as the kazoo; appear exclusively at the foot of festival bills and have an apparent dislike for what you and I might refer to as "real notes". People who maintain that free-jazz musicians can't play are dumb, but groups like this give them a strong case.

Actually the most interesting thing about *Honkattack* is not the music, the rudimentary abstract painting on the cover or the photocopied monochrome insert, but the label. Bop



Cassettes are a Manchester-based independent cassette-only label specialising in the less saleable end of the New Jazz market. Its presence seems wholly appropriate at a time when the low-budget independent recording ideals that were pioneered by 50s and 60s jazz musicians and producers as a means of circumventing mainstream indifference to their work are finding increasing favour at the more commercial end of black music. I'm not saying we have a new ESP or BYG on our hands because the Honkies' pale imitations of the Ayler brothers' Baptist fervour freak-outs and the AACM's Sound In Space explorations are the products of musicians who see jazz as circumspect rather than concert hall. But given some judicious A & R decisions, a maintenance of the current house packaging and who knows?

TONY HERRINGTON

## GARY BURTON

### TIMES LIKE THESE

(GRP-A-9569)

Recorded: New York, 1988.  
*Times Like These, Oh Else; Robert Frost, Why'd You Do It?, P.M.; War Is So Long Ago!, Besto Biag.*  
Gary Burton (vib); John Scofield (g); Marc Johnson (b); Peter Erskine (d); Michael Brecker (ts).

GARY BURTON has this perverse unwillingness to work with guitarists. Here he is again, on the sleeve notes to this one-off collaboration with John Scofield, insisting that he really doesn't plan to do it any more. This is strange, because a glance back at his career shows that nearly all his best work has been with guitarists: from the early adventurousness of the Coryell quartet, through the inspired contributions of Mick Goodrick to his early ECM albums, and – best of all – his partnership with Ralph Towner, which gave us the excellent *Matchbook* and *Slide Show*.

For me, at least, the rot set in with Burton when he started to see too much of Chick Corea. Not only do piano and vibraphone tend to cancel each other out as often as complement each other, but Corea's brand of easy-going lyricism was unsuited to an improviser whose greatest strength seemed to be his lucidity in the face of often forbidding, dark-edged music (Bley's *Genius Tong Funeral*, Mike Gibbs' *Saw Songs For Quartet And Chamber Orchestra*). What followed, in the early 80s, was a series of faceless and timid group albums which tended to do less than justice to their (occasionally) interesting material.

So by now Gary – once to be seen wearing kafans and playing electric vibes at rock festivals – is quite a portly gent, with a well-trimmed moustache and a penchant for V-necked sweaters. The good news is that he can still rise to a moderately challenging occasion, and there are moments on this album (his first since leaving ECM) better than anything he has produced for years. In particular, Vince Mendoza's "Oh Else" allows him to punch out the kind of disjunct melody, high up in the register, that he used to favour in the RCA years, and it leads into some strange, inventive swaps with Scofield. "Robert Frost" is a pleasing ballad which leaves you slightly dissatisfied with the vibraphone's resources as a melody instrument, and on Corea's "P.M." everyone has the chance to get going a bit (this is Scofield's best solo). Mike Brecker guestes on two tracks but he might as well have stayed at

home; bell-like clarity is the order of the day here, and his tenor sounds like an uninvited guest at a rather genteel dinner party.

JONATHAN COPE

### DINAH WASHINGTON THE COMPLETE VOL. I (Official 3004)

Recorded: 1943–45.

*Lil' Gal Blues, I Know How To Do It, Salty Paper Blues, Honoured Board, Blue-Tip Blues, Wayfaring Blues, Walking Blues, No Name No Root, Cheatin' Mama Blues, My Lovin' Paper, Rab Man's Blues, All Or Nothing, Beggin' Mama Blues, Melba Mama Blues, My Way Is Really True, Blues For A Day, Pacific Coast Blues*

Dinah Washington (v), acc Lionel Hampton Sextet, Lucky Thompson All Stars.

### THE COMPLETE VOL. 2 (Official 3005)

Recorded: 1946–47.

*Embraceable You, I Can't Get Started, When A Woman Loves A Man, Joy Juice, On-Way Walkin' Troubles, The Man I Love, You Didn't Want Me Then, A Slack Chuck, Postman Blues, That's Why A Woman Likes A Head, Mean And Evil Blues, Stealin' To The Store, I Want To Be Loved, You Satisfy, Food That I Ate, There's Got To Be A Change*.

Acc Guy Chappell Orch, Gerald Wilson Orch, Tab Smith Orch, Chubby Jackson Orch, Dave Young Orch

### THE COMPLETE VOL. 3 (Official 3007)

Recorded: 1947.

*Mean And Evil Blues, Since I Fall For You, West Side Baby, You Can Depend On Me, Early In The Morning, I'm Afraid Of You, I Love You, Yet I Do, Don't Come Knocking At My Door, I Wish I Knew The Name Of The Boy, Walkin' And Talkin', Ain't I Madechaun', What Can I Say After I Say I'm Sorry, Tell Me So, I Can't Face The Music, Pate*

Acc: Rudy Martin Trio, Teddy Brannon Quartet, Dave Young Orch.

### THE COMPLETE VOL. 4 (Official 3008)

Recorded: 1947–49.

*Am I Asking You Much?, I'm Getting Old Before My Time, Racer Bare Blues, Resolutin' Blues, I Went To Cry, Long John Blues, In The Rain, I Sold My Heart To The Jewbustan, I'll Wait, It's Too Soon To Know, Why Care? You Behave!, It's Funny, Laughing Boy, Am I Really Sorry?, Hear-Deep Is The Grouse!, New York, Chicago And Los Angeles*

Acc: Dave Young Orch, Colette Williams Orch, Mitch Miller Orch, Teddy Stewart Orch

WASHINGTON is still underrated and, though this comprehensive collection of early issues is variable, it draws attention to the individuality

and intensity of her best work.

Jur's turned 19 at the time of her first session, she had switched from gospel to singing blues with Lionel Hampton's band. Timing and diction were reminiscent of Billie Holiday with the vocal sound of Helen Humes, before Humes herself adapted to blues in the wake of Dinah's popular success. It's two years later when the star of her 15-year Mercury contract gives her the chance to try some Tin Pan Alley standards. The first four of these on Vol 2 had all been recorded by Billie (coincidence?) but "Man I Love" is the first to show an unrestrained gospel approach to this material. It's also the first track here to have remained unissued for decades (coincidence again?) and illustrates the record company's ambivalence about marketing an innovator.

As the style takes root and the voice quality



begins to mature, you can hear where Aretha and everyone else took Dinah's lead. But, at this relatively early stage, the style is very much at the mercy of the songs. There are still a lot of blues and they vary considerably as to the interest of the lyrics (several which portray female independence were on a Rosetta compilation while some others are more masochistic, while Vol 4's once-famous "Long John" is pure petted pornography).

The new ballads of the day also afforded Dinah a lot of scope, as well as a few hits. Some were even more successful in cover versions (like "It's Too Soon To Know") but the four Vol 4 tracks with a choir and about Mitch Miller are the low spot. Recorded in mid-1948 when the musicians' strike kept her jazz colleagues out of the studio, Dinah is clearly trying to play it straight and doubtless at the

request of Miller, who was shortly to co-produce Parker With Strings and to cure both Frankie Laine and Tony Bennett of their jazz-singing ambitions.

Nobody would want to listen to any of this product principally for the backings, although Vol 2 has tiny glimpses of altoist Tab Smith and Von Freeman's mentor Dave Young. Vol 1 has the highest solo content, with the twelve 1945 tracks featuring Lucky Thompson and Milt Jackson and one burst of Mingus (he must also have arranged "Mellow Mama", which is not one of the two songs credited to him). But Vol 3, mostly with Nat Cole Trio-type groups, has the most homogeneous vocals and a representative selection of ballads, standards and blues.

And if all this isn't enough, there's apparently a Japanese CD set that includes all this and newly released tracks from the same period.

BRIAN PRIESTLEY

### HANS PETER HIBY—PAUL HESSON THE REAL CASE (Senti 101)

Recorded: Germany, 24 January 1988.

*Fleter, I Won't Stop My Bobbls, An Den Nana Herauffahren, Roger De Cokk Elektrovis  
Hans Peter Huby (sax), Paul Hesson (d)*

A set of four free-jazz-inspired improvisations. Of the two players here Hesson strikes me as the more developed in his playing: I can hear aspects of Roach, Oxley, Stevens and Lovens rolled into a very convincing and modern synthesis. A constant wave of motion, breaking up and dividing into different parts, setting off new processes, as if he just has to set the thing off and it plays itself. In this way a whole set of rhythmic, melodic and dynamic possibilities are created within a fluid, light and very responsive context.

Unfortunately Huby seems largely oblivious to his partner's depths and complexities, perhaps prizing his own expressiveness over the qualities of interaction. He has a straightforward free-jazz style, very obviously derived from Ayler through Brötzmann. But from this recording at least he seems to lack either the hysteria, lust, sheer obsessiveness or whatever it is that makes this kind of get-up-there-and-do-it stuff work. His improvisations also lack dynamic contrast and rhythmic intrigue, tending towards monotony.

Special mention must be given to "Bub-

bles", an extended squeaky-fart exploration of a mouthpiece and a bowl of water accompanied by some delightful pitter-patter from Hession. This is a much more promising direction than all the energy music/free-jazz nostalgia. The record is worth hearing for that track alone.

RICHARD SCOTT

### ABDULLAH IBRAHIM (DOLLAR BRAND)

#### THE AFRICAN RECORDINGS VOL. 1: VOICE OF AFRICA (Kaz LP 101)

Recorded South Africa, 1976–1977

*Black Lightning; Little Boy; Black And Blue; Chorus; Niyala; Kewu; The Truth I've Seen; Blue For B; Grooves; Kwenda;*

Ibrahim (p, ss), Dennis Mpala (t), Kippie Moeketsi, Basil Coetzee, Duku Makasi, Robbie Jansen, Barney Rachabane, Arthur Jacobs (vclts), Sipho Gumede, Basil Moses, Paul Mcholi, Victor Ntomo, Victor Ntombi, Lamef Beukes (b), Gilbert Mathews, Monty Welber, Nelson Mgijaza, Peter Murike, Tammy Kwebulana, Nazier Kapasi (d) (collective personnel)

One of the problems of this job, relatively speaking, is having to assess recordings by artists who receive considerable popular acclaim yet leave you critically cold. I'm thinking here of records by Keith Jarrett, Pat Metheny, Gary Burton, Michael Brecker and, quite probably, Courtney Pine, Andy Sheppard and Loose Tubes too. The difficulty comes in knowing when to risk going out on a limb by rubbishing the things as worthless and a diversion from the good stuff and when to hold your tongue. Sometimes, of course, it pays to be smart. Other times, maybe, the decision is made for you.

Panning an Abdullah Ibrahim record, for instance, won't just be a round-about way of calling into question the considered tastes of a large part of the jazz record-buying public but will effectively be laying siege to the music's higher moral ground. The manner in which Ibrahim's recorded work has been linked to the political struggle in South Africa over the past 25 years has given it a singularly unimpeachable air and effectively removed it from the

analyst's couch. Joyous, solemn, exquisite and dignified are the words most over-used by Ibrahim followers, and critics have done little to expand on such meaningless adjectival shoplifting. Instead they have preferred to adopt an unparalleled hands-off-in-kid-gloves approach, a unique phenomenon that can be found at all stages of the pianist's career but is most in evidence whenever the recordings he made in South Africa during the 1970s come under discussion.

These records, through their respectful adoption of indigenous idioms such as *mashu*, church music and township jazz, impart a message of heightened spiritual awareness and unyielding physical resistance, we are told. Well, I don't hear much of that. Ibrahim's commitment to the struggle to release his country from the grip of apartheid is beyond

long-winded versions of the 50s R&B honk 'n' holler school with the occasional nod towards 70s loft-scene freakouts. Conversely, Ibrahim's features are drastically overstuffed, frantically mixing in quotes from a dozen different sources in an attempt to balance the one-dimensional aspect of his writing, when patently just one or two would have been more appropriate.

TONY HERRINGTON

### BRIAN PRIESTLEY SPECIAL SEPTET

#### LOVE YOU GLADLY

(Cadillac SGC 1021)

Recorded: London, 8 March 1988

*Everybody But You; The Moose; Ducalypso; Mood Indigo; Band Call; Blue For Dook; Downtown Uptown; Love You Gladly; Angelica.*

Digby Fairweather (x); Derek Wadsworth (tb); Olav Vas (as, bs, cl); Don Rendell (ss, ts, cl); Brian Priestley (p); Paul Budge (b); Trevor Tomkiss (d).

IT'S USEFUL having the leader write his own sleeve notes sometimes. I don't have to mention all the little historical and musical felicities which Brian's arrangements of Ellington throw out, even if I knew them; he mentions most of them himself. I sighed when I saw yet another "Mood Indigo", but somehow Priestley manages to coax some of the most committed playing of the date out of his team for this one. I should've known such a scholar wouldn't settle for the easy re-creation.

The sleeve photo of seven young runaways prepared me for some fuming *American*-style workouts, but all is done with civil tongue. The horns each get regular turns in the spotlight, reminding me in particular how unimpeachable a player Don Rendell still is — try his sortie on "Ducalypso" (graced with an outrageous pun on the sleeve). It's a connoisseur's programme of Ellington: I doubt if many have done "Band Call", "Downtown Uptown", "Angelica" or even "Everybody But You" since Duke did them. Priestley's originals are trademarked with sausian wit. "Blue" includes a chorus of quotes which students will enjoy ticking off. "Ducalypso" has a nice swagger, and "Gladly" suggests that it deserves a more substantial reading than this hastily-assembled one.

Anything wrong? Well, "The Moose" is too ripe for me, and I wish there were more bits of the Priestley pen here and there rather than strings of solos. But it's a cheerful, very playable record.

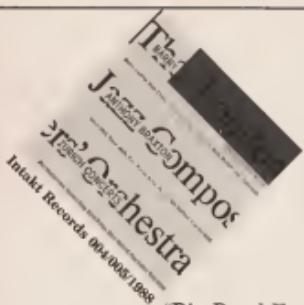
RICHARD COOK



doubt and it is the critical community, rather than the pianist himself, that has erected a moral cocoon around his music; but behind all the impassioned rhetoric lies an essentially modest talent.

Since their release, songs like "Mannenburg", "Black Lightning" and "African Herbs" have passed into near-legendary status for fans and aficionados alike, hearing them now it's difficult to understand why. Like most of the pieces here they fatally overstretch Ibrahim's twin stock-in-trades of extended piano-based vamps and pared-down big-band section scoring. From a compositional point of view they are wafer-thin, minor works that offer little by way of distinction or involvement. Nor does the actual playing justify the music's reputation. Of the saxophonists, Moeketsi and Coetzee are second liners at best, offering

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The international ensemble of musicians appearing on the recording includes long-time associate Don Cherry on trumpet, Dragon co-founder Steve Swell on drums, and the dynamic Swedish bass-guitarist Jan Akkerman meeting the noted French keyboardist and arranger Daniel Humair. The band also features Gurtu and Durutti meeting the noted Thormo vocalist Shashikala Gurtu. Each made a special contribution to the recording, which clearly highlights the percussionist's musicality in a uniquely personal "sound" that is as much in common with fusion as it is consistent with traditional Indian music.

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**MELLOW MAYHEM**

(JC Records JCR 902)

Recorded: London, August 1988

Ed Jones Quartet: *Dewey's Tune*, Andy Sheppard and Keith Tippett, *Inspirational*, Mervyn Africa Quartet: *Mhatanga Blues*; Dave O'Higgins Quartet: *When Will The Blues Leave?*; Claude Deppe Trio: *Eat Your Heart Out, Cleveland*; Phil Bent Band: *Phil's Blues*.

JOIN DABNER, of North London's Jazz Cafe, gets my personal award for services to jazz in 1988, for providing me with so much listening pleasure during the year. If this sounds unduly fulsome and you're sceptical, listen to this album, which provides a representative sample of the fare on offer at Dabner's establishment.

Ed Jones is a real find, yet another exciting young tenor and soprano saxophonist with a sound at once volcanic and sinewy. His pianist Geoff Williams, late of Sphere, is a deliciously eccentric player; drummer Winslow Clifford is exuberant and subtle; bassist Rob Statham is always fluent and cogent. "Dewey's Tune" is a bustling performance by an excellent band.

Sheppard and Tippett, old sparing partners, turn in an exhilarating performance, the pianist's prowling low-register work and crashing chords the perfect accompaniment to Sheppard's skittering soprano. Mervyn Africa's rollicking contribution is catchy, if a little repetitive, though saxophonist Dave Birrell is in fine form. Dave O'Higgins goes at Ornette Coleman's "When Will The Blues Leave?" like a bull at a gate, but Mike Bradley's tumbling drums provide a more than adequate anchor; trumpeter Claude Deppe, by contrast, displays a great deal of light and shade, alternating between angry little spouts and an affecting buzzing urgency – but again drummer Louis Moholo anchors the sound, ticking away under the leader's extravagances. The Phil Bent Band lay down their familiar funk groove, leavened with sudden splashes of synthesised sound and some tasteful guitar from Tony Remy. Bent's flute, as ever, is a delight, fluent and vibrant.

Overall, the album is a perfect demonstration of the strength, in depth, of the present young(ish) UK jazz scene: lively, varied and, above all, enthusiastic and dedicated. Ignore all those dreadful hyped-up acid-jazz compilations and buy the real thing.

CHRIS PARKER

**RICHARD TEITELBAUM**

**CONCERTO GROSSO**

(hat ART CD 6004)

Recorded: Cologne, 3 May 1985

INTERLUDES: *Fontaine*, *Captain*.

Anthony Braxton (sa, cl, etc), George Lewis (tb, etc); Richard Teitelbaum (p, etc).

THE FULL title here is "Concerto Grosso (1985) For Human Concertina And Robotic Ripieno", which tends to take the breath away, but it's not that complicated really. Concerto grosso is an old form for a group of solo instruments (the concerti) set against orchestra (the ripieno). As such, it's been around for centuries, the midgett in here is that it's been hijacked as a "free" vehicle and the ripieno is wholly non-human, a computerised mix of pre-instructed piano, digitally-sampled strings,



percussion and effects, with a built-in real-time response which "listens" to the solos and incorporates and responds to what they're doing by modifying its own programme accordingly. Simple, yeah? One odd by-product is that a ghostly – and actually rather good – drummer keeps dropping in for a jam among other phenomena like the more predictable phantom xylophone. When Gil Evans introduced the possibility of new bottles, old wine some 30 years ago I don't think he'd seen quite this far.

OK, but how good is it? Well frankly it will never grab you by the collar of your zoof suit and make you get up and give but it does make you listen and sustain interest. Teitelbaum often displays the arpeggio runs that Cecil Taylor makes before he gets down to business but doesn't go further down that route

himself, quite possibly having enough to do keeping his robotic forces in order, while Braxton, to whom this sort of eventuality is no doubt as familiar as beans-on-toast by now, simply takes it unfalteringly in stride. The formidable George Lewis views it more physically, the man and the trombone slide are part of the same organism, and he starts slow but comes to focus attention by the end of the work.

The concern's textural density sets it apart from any "new-age" doodling, and there's also a certain inevitability of development, even though it's hard to identify thematic material as such. It may well be that its formal organisation not only reflects the concerto grosso in broad terms, but also respects its properties, though I wouldn't want to give you the last word on that.

However, in the final analysis we do have here two players whose work is always worth hearing, never dull, plus Teitelbaum, who's certainly gone to some lengths to organise the event and the material, and who deserves to be taken seriously

JACK COOKE

**LEE KONITZ**

**NEW YORK ALBUM**

(Soul Note 121 169-1)

Recorded: New York, 18–19 August 1987.

*Canalight Shadow*, *Everybody's Sayin' Baby*, *Give Love*, *Mendelson Round*, *Sapsteller Waltz*, *Dream Variation*, *Invitation*

Lee Konitz (sa), Harold Danko (p), Marc Johnson (b), Adam Nussbaum (d).

PICK UP any old *Downbeat* from the early 70s, and in the classifieds Lee Konitz was advertising for students. It was one of the monumental miscarriages of justice that a player of Konitz' ability should have been swept to the sidelines first by the 60s' "New Thing" and then by the blind alley of fusion in the 70s. Whether the experience made Konitz a wiser man is open to speculation, but by the time he re-emerged in the 80s he was certainly older.

Such recording exposure he did receive during those years – particularly his continued association with Wayne Marsh – suggest his playing may have peaked, but without anyone really noticing. Certainly during the current decade, both live and on record, Konitz's playing has been variable. With a player of his high standards this can be just a matter of degree, but his style, the art of genuine

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spontaneous creation, of spinning melodic variations one upon another to form a complete improvised fabric, is a fragile art indeed. If inspiration falters the overall design suffers. So let it be said that *New York Alluvia* does not reach the heights of *Idiot Slew* (Soul Note), which is beginning to look like Konitz's crowning lasterday achievement.

*New York Alluvia* is brittle and methodical, with Konitz sifting on the changes, tensing the melody this way and that without really coming up with any definitive statements. His tone, curiously pinched and nasal, is accentuated by use of soprano sax on "Dream Variation" and the Kenny Wheeler composition "Everybody's Song But My Own". Even so, Harold Danko continues his elegant association with Konitz, and Marc Johnson and Adam Nussbaum add deft, sophisticated touches that place the rhythm section beyond reproach.

Although Konitz lifts "Limehouse Blues" from the ordinary, with his pamphrased introduction leading to his most lucid playing on the album, "Dream Variation", "September Walez" and "Invitation" float by, as if in a trance. Konitz seems preoccupied, his playing sinewy, spare and drier than ever, adding perhaps to the emotional distance between player and listener.

STUART NIC HOLTON

## LESTER YOUNG

### PREZ'S HAT VOL. 1

#### (Philology 214W6)

*These Finest Things, I Cover The Waterfront, Lester Leaps It, Blues Is G., Peacock From Heaven, This Is Always, I Cover The Waterfront, I Cover The Waterfront, There Will Never Be Another You, Lester Leaps It, Digger, My Idol, Blue Lou, Lester Leaps It, The Truth, Jealousy & The Star, Jangoo At The Woodside, I Never Knew Let's Step It*  
 Tracks 1-4, Paris, 3 March 1951; Young (ts), Oscar Peterson (p), Barney Kessel (g); Ray Brown (b), J.C. Heard (d)  
 Track 5, Paris, Autumn 1956; Young (ts), Reine Uttinger (p); Faure Michelin (b), Christian Gamm (d).  
 Tracks 6-7, Paris, 6 April 1952; Young (ts), Hank Jones (p), Ray Brown (b), Max Roach (d).  
 Tracks 8-9, "Blue Note", Paris, March 1959; Young (ts); Harold Kaufman (p); Kenny Clarke (d).  
 Track 10, New York, 1959; Young (ts), Dickie Wells (b), Count Basie (p); Freddie Green (g), Walter Page (b), Jo Jones (d).  
 Tracks 11-18, Hotel Lincoln, New York, May 1944; Count Basie Orchestra.

### PREZ'S HAT VOL. 2

#### (Philology 214W7)

*Lady Be Good, G's Blue, Jangoo With Sjogren's Sud, Doctor Of The Grottoes, Blue Room, Jangoo Jive, K. C. Strut, There'll Be Some Changes Made, Let's Jangoo, Hey! Baby, Jangoo At The Woodside*  
 Tracks 1-3, Washington DC, December 1956; Young (ts), Farl Sways (tb), Bill Purvis (p), Norman Williams (b), Jim Lucht (d).  
 Tracks 4-11, as before: Count Basie Orchestra.

### PREZ'S HAT VOL. 3

#### (Philology 214W8)

*Up 'N Adon, You Alleviate For Weak, Lullaby Of Birdland, Lester Leaps It, Pecker Days And Moonbeams, Up 'N Adon, In A Little Spanish Tavern, Dusty, I Never Know, Body Wore / You Played Care House, Ah, What A Fug., Jangoo At The Woodside, Avenue C*  
 Tracks 1-2, Birdland, New York, 15 April 1953; Young (ts), Joe Drakes (t), Horace Silver (p), Franklin Skeet (b), Connie Kay (d).  
 Tracks 3-7, Birdland, New York, 7 August 1956; Young (ts); prob. Drakes (t), unknown p, b, d. Tracks 8-13, as before: Count Basie Orchestra.



### PREZ'S HAT VOL. 4

#### (Philology 214W9)

*Lullaby Of Birdland, There Latin Ward, These Bodish Drags, Blue Is G., You Put Me Now, Jangoo Jive, Broadway, My Idol, Canna In Rhythm, Tuesday At The Hotel, Horatio Blues, Rock-A-Billy Blues, Devil's Per Double*.  
 Tracks 1-5, Birdland, New York, 5 September 1956; Young (ts); prob. Drakes (t), unknown p, b, d.  
 Tracks 6-13, as before: Count Basie Orchestra.

I'll try not to be a repeater-pencil for the piece I wrote years ago (before Dave Gelly's and Lewis Porter's books about Prez). I drew similar conclusions about a deliberate musical change from 1942 on, confirmed by the '44 Basie tracks on these albums, which predated the mental depression that eventually skewed the style even further from young Lester.

There are obvious parallels between Young and Bud Powell, plus the near coincidence that both visited Paris in 1959. But Powell, I believe, made fewer deliberate changes and kept trying for (occasionally succeeding at) a rediscovery of his earlier brilliance. Lester, on the other hand, extended his economy of notes and reliance on inflection so drastically as to come close to self-parody.

A better comparison is between him and Lady Day, who also relied more and more on stylistic idiosyncrasies in order to make performance technically easier. There's a dramatic instance in the first "Leaps" on volume one here (its impact heightened by crass editing) when Young fills four four-bar breaks with a single note, its weird distortions and weirder timings contradicting the implied runaway tempo. Lester liked to feel unhurried even when totally in command and, with sympathetic accompanists, achieves both states intermittently throughout these recordings.

One of the difficulties of generalising about Prez's later work is the variability of his playing, and one of the best demonstrations is the Blue Note airtight, done within days of his death. A fragment of "Waterfront" precedes Kenny Clarke interviewed (in French) by Henri Renard, and then Klock guides Lester through a highly convincing "Another You" that puts to shame the last studio session with virtually the same group.

One of the other variables is sound quality. Dave Gelly once pointed out (though not in his book) that the then-new 1950s emphasis on close miking in the studio betrayed certain saxophone tones, and that the less hi-fi radio remotes were sometimes more faithful, especially to Lester. That's part of why "Another You" sounds so healthy.

Reproduction is variable, but so is reproduction. The four minutes with Max Roach billed as "First (And Only) Time Together!" is a ballad medley and Max's brushes are totally inaudible, while the 1956 sets (one introduced by Paul Whiteman) are only so-so. On the other hand, "Up 'N Adam" featuring Horace Silver (which also crops up on a recent Deja Vu album with Silver miscredited as John Lewis!) is perhaps a first-generation dub and feels vibrantly alive.

It's always dangerous to assume that material such as this is unissued, but I believe it's true of everything here except a couple of the Basies. The first side of volume one is

frustrating in its bitterness (due to edits inherent in the original broadcasts) but the rest deliver more than they promise musically. Each volume is obtainable separately, and the excellent Basic material (about half each album) has lots of Harry Edison, Dickie Wells and as much Buddy Tate tenor as Lester.

Finally, I don't know why volume one has just one studio track (the splendid alternate take of the 1939 "Leaps", available these last 15 years) but it certainly throws into relief the later Lester. Much of which compares surprisingly well, considering what we know of its creator.

BRIAN PRIESTLEY

### BRANFORD MARSALIS RANDOM ABSTRACT

(CBS 461067 1)

Recorded Tokyo, 12 & 13 August 1987.

*Ye And No, Crescent City, Broadway Fools; Leafletin, I Thought About You, Lonely Woman, Step's There.*  
Marsalis (ts, ss); Kenny Kirkland (p); Delbert Felix (b); Lewis Nash (d).

TALK TO any jazz musician whose music coaxes myopically down the no-exit street of Neo-Traditionalism/Post-Modernism and sooner or later they're going to tell you that a stray Bunk Johnson '78 was as relevant to their musical indoctrination as the entire Blue Note, Prestige and Contemporary back-catalogues put together. Funny enough you don't get to hear much evidence of this in the actual records, the overdriving impression gained from prolonged exposure to the genre being that jazz started with Miles Davis' 1965 *ESP* Quinter and then it stopped.

Branford Marsalis' *Royal Garden Blues* LP of last year – a profoundly conservative rather than traditional record – was notable in this respect for applying some musical substance to all the talk about tradition and heritage, in particular the title track's attempts to update the Dixieland idiom by locating it in a contemporary model setting. Hardly earth shattering I grant you, but admirable if only for its complete lack of satire, parody and the kind of patronising attitude that afflicts most similar revivals.

Branford's new record tries to flesh out the bones of another favoured Neo-Traditionalist topic, namely the major influence check list. You're alerted to its intentions early by the sleeve credits, bestowing "Special Thanks" upon Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk, Ben

Webster, John Coltrane, Wayne Shorter and Ornette Coleman. I have long harboured the suspicion that if there is to be a logical conclusion to this genre's obsessive genelecting then it will come with the first record to successfully capsize the notion that individual music expression is not a heretical act and that wholesale recreations of the past are what it's been about all along. Well, let me tell you, *Random Abstract* is that record and it's even more pointless than anticipated. It's so pointless, in fact, you almost feel like taking a pencil sharpener to it.

Having to deal with impressionable young men labouring under the illusion that *A Love Supreme* and *Speak No Evil* are the jazz equivalents of *The Sermon On The Mount* is something of an occupational hazard these days. That doesn't make it any easier to

*ART BLAKEY AND THE JAZZ MESSENGERS*  
NOT YET

(Soul Note 121 105-1)

Recorded Milan, 19 March 1988.

*Kenji's Mood; For Heaven's Sake, Not Yet, I'll Never Be The Same; Ummah, Falling In Love With Love; Koko.*

Philip Harper (v); Robin Eubanks (tb); Jessie Jackson (ts); Benny Green (p); Peter Washington (b); Art Blakey (d).



stomach Branford's efforts to relive the atmosphere of a John Coltrane/Wayne Shorter studio date circa 1964. I'd rate these tracks as being only slightly less gruesome than his excruciating recreation of a typical late 50s Ben Webster performance. The version of Johnny Mercer's "I Thought About You" documents the extent of Webster's decline from his early '40s peak with such morbid attention to detail, right down to the barbitic wavering vibrato, it's unsettling.

Now don't get me wrong, I like Branford Marsalis. His tendency to record music where the potentially dynamic combination of a wide-ranging imagination and a dazzling technique are constantly held in check by a rigorously intellectual approach has produced some memorable moments in the past. The retrogressive scope of *Random Abstract* ensures

you lose all that. It sounds like the work of a musician so in awe of all that has developed before him that he lacks confidence in his ability to carve a personal niche.

That's not to say it won't sell of course. It will. The irony is that for all its efforts to be authentic and in-the-tradition, *Random Abstract* will appeal exclusively to that end of the market that sees jazz as a lifestyle accessory or marketing weapon. Branford Marsalis is far from stupid. Surely he knows this.

TONY HERRINGTON

### ART BLAKEY AND THE JAZZ MESSENGERS

NOT YET

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Recorded Milan, 19 March 1988.

*Kenji's Mood; For Heaven's Sake, Not Yet, I'll Never Be The Same; Ummah, Falling In Love With Love; Koko.*

Philip Harper (v); Robin Eubanks (tb); Jessie Jackson (ts); Benny Green (p); Peter Washington (b); Art Blakey (d).

BLAKEY'S ALBUMS, as much as his groups, have created their own dynasty. Comparisons always stretch back to classic Blue Note dates. Can a new Messengers LP be as good as *Mosaic* or *The Big Beat*? Given that all of them are formula records, no matter how inventive, it's a reasonable line.

This one is relaxed as Messengers records go. The tracks tend to be long, three of them over nine minutes, and the customary here's-my-stuff-whaddya-think solos are enacted outside the pressurised situation which The Messengers are renowned for creating. For all the clichés about the "ageless" Blakey, the fact remains that the man is nearly 70 years old; he's still strong, but he doesn't storm things along as he once might have done. It's a nice batch of tunes: three good standards, two originals by band members, two jazz compositions by other bands.

Little touches by Green, in particular, add a mild spice to some of the arrangements, and "Falling In Love" receives modification. Mostly, though, it's a steady blowing record, which points up the one serious weakness of The Messengers: they've never been directed as a band in the small-group manner of, say, George Russell. I like Green's elegant decoration of "I'll Never Be The Same", and Harper and Eubanks have their telling moments. The most significant thing about the record, though, might be the production – the clarity

brings out the subtlety rather than the power of Blakey's stickwork.

MIKE FISHER

### ART TATUM

#### THE COMPLETE CAPITOL RECORDINGS (Affinity AFFD 191)

Recorded: (A) Los Angeles, 13 and 25 July, 1929; September 1949, (B) New York, 20 December 1952.  
 (A) *Willow Weep For Me; I Carter The Waterfront; Aunt Hagar's Blues; Now Work If You Can Get It; Susanna To Watch Over Me; Dardanella; Yester On My Hands; Sweet Lorraine; Somebody Loves Me; Don't Blame Me; My Heart Stood Still; You Took Advantage Of Me; I Gave Right To Sing The Blues; Hear High The Moon; Makin' Whoopee; Goon House Blue Skies; It's The Talk Of The Town; Doin' In The Dark; Tenderly.*  
 (B) *Mahogany In F; September Swing; Would You Like To Take A Walk; Tea For Two; Out Of Nowhere; Lover; Just One Of These Things; Indiana.*  
 (A) Tatum (p); (B) add Everett Barksdale (tg), Slam Stewart (bs).

"His IDEAS, melodically and harmonically, are so startling that sometimes you find yourself at a loss." This understatement by poor Everett Barksdale, guitarist on the last of these classic Tatum sessions, would be echoed by many listeners too. Some turn into the critics Brian Priestley is concerned to refute in his sleeve-note. What's the problem with the rapt keyboard colossus then?

André Hodeir stirred things up back in the '50s when he complained that Tatum's method was just to ornament the themes with arpeggios and the like, irritating André by disrupting the rhythmic pulse. Well, jazz musicians aren't meant to do this. They're supposed to *restructure* the theme, transforming it (often enough) into strings of eighth-notes which only share its harmonies. But Hodeir is right about Tatum's method. And though it's unusual for jazz, it complements the more orthodox method beautifully, eg in the late sessions with Carter and De Franco.

In fact, you might say this approach is the most important of the "classical borrowings" in Tatum's armoury — since it's basic classical variation technique from Bach to Brahms. That is, presenting the theme in a variety of glittering settings, variously ornamented and harmonically altered but with the basic melodic outline preserved. Once you see this, other things fall into place. The cascading arpeggios and rhythmic disruptions, the myriad passing chords and substitutions, bewildering modulations that last two bars or less — these aren't just the icing on the cake, they're the method

of improvisation itself. "Ornamentation" has a structural function, given Tatum's basic premise of variation. (A parallel here with late Beethoven might not be too far-fetched).

Tatum may indeed be a "master of the blues" — and though there's only a solitary example on these sides, the classic "Aunt Hagar's Blues", the tradition subtly permeates his playing. Also apparent is another classical appropriation — of the essentially light, virtuous confessions of European salon music. But in Tatum's hands Anton Rubinstein's "Melody In F" becomes hilarious as well as exhilarating. The unbearable lightness of being Tatum no doubt appealed to that other great confectionist, Vladimir Horowitz, but no, that's unfair. Though the two tracks are mostly show-pieces, the solo sides here are often beautifully affecting as well as dazzling.

and Thelonious Monk. Neidlinger's intentions are explicit: "They both referred to what I call the New York style of piano playing . . . When one says that Ellington was a swing musician and Monk is a bebopper, one shows a great inability to judge musical styles." Neidlinger has a point — Monk swung like crazy, late Ellington had no problems pastiching Monk's trademarks — and this record carries the point home.

Tracks are short, the sound spiky. The pianoless instrumentation recalls that of the Texas string bands, precursors of the cross-cultural glory of Western Swing. It abolishes the unscrolling stolidness of by-ro bop (where tunes are demoted to bookends for a succession of solos) replacing it with a rattling freakishness halfway between moonshine-fuelled hillbilly yea-ha and bebop's surreal perversity. Neidlinger has his finger on a genuine pulse: it is there in the String Trio Of New York (when it included premier violinist Billy Bang) and in Ornette Coleman's new album. Ornette once mused that he probably used white bassists (LeFaro, Haden) because of the European tradition of string playing. Certainly String Jazz gives the white-black who-owes-whom plair another twist. Neidlinger, incidentally, is white, though a lot of people thought he was black because he emerged with Cecil Taylor and Archie Shepp. He also used to lead a bluegrass band called (of course) Buellgrass.

Neidlinger is a *bass* player, not a frustrated guitarist. He plays low, dry and firm. Like tuba player Bob Stewart he is interested in rhythmic leadership rather than endless showcase solos. Marty Krystall presents a glittering post-free reconstruction of sock-it-to-you tenor sax, a big classic sound that keeps things from becoming too frothy. Billy Osborne's commendably spare drumming (echoes of Dennis Charles, Neidlinger's cohort in the Cecil Taylor band) and absence of piano give him space to fly — on "Boo Boo's Birthday" his dipping line is outrageously exciting. Benton Banks is a straightforward Ray Nance-type violinist (none of Bang's microronal provocation) but is crucial, as is John Kurnick's skipping mandolin.

The jostling beatlessness of the instruments focuses attention on the tunes, and the leader is right. Duke and Monk emerge as great jump-blues composers. Bebop is something new though, as you realise on "Skippy": the



All the same, listening again to "Dardanella", a case-study in Tarumesque modulation, or the startling treatment of "Tea For Two", we're reminded of Horowitz's own judgment from Café Society Downtown. "It can't be true. I don't believe my eyes and ears."

ANDY HAMILTON

### BUELL NEIDLINGER'S STRING JAZZ

#### LOCOMOTIVE

(Soul Note 121 161-1)

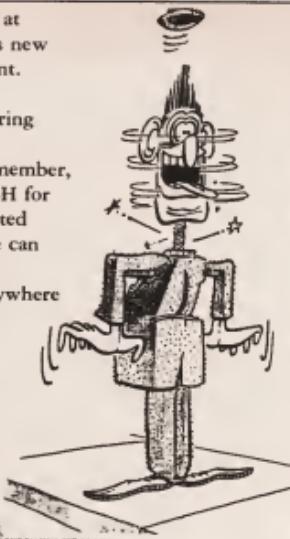
Recorded Milan, 24-5 June 1987

*Rushes In Ripples; Rain Fever; Locomotive; Jezebel; Peacock; Skippy; Jackie-egg; I Must You; Soothie Shaggy; Brake's Sake; Boo Boo's Birthday; Mammaroo; Marty Krystall (ts); Benton Banks (vn); John Kurnick (mandolin); Buell Neidlinger (b); Billy Osborne (ds).*

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BEN WATSON

### ERICK MONTGOMERY JUST PASSING THROUGH (Handrum HDLP 001)

Recorded: London, July 1987

*Pablo Colorado Rain Forest; Call; Bhutan; Magenta Knob-Knot; Just Passing Through; Karst Plateau; They Leave Ground; Asher Vines; Negroid; Spines*  
Dave Shull (ts), Bob Morgan (ts, cl, g), Matt Fretton (v, b, DX7), Tim Harris (b); Erick Montgomery (perc); Gerry O'Riordan (dl). (Collective personnel.)

ERICK MONTGOMERY is a percussionist and this is his first album; even so he should know better than to describe it as "music which paints pictures". Most of it exists as unprogrammed cameos with bass, voice, synth or sax joining in, leaving Montgomery to play the likes of waterphone, pod rattle, damped timbales, talking drum, berimbau. You get the picture – the sort of project where the mere presence of an mbira is deemed sufficient to "capture the nuance of a myriad of cultures".

"Pablo Colorado Rain Forest", the opening track, is not untypical. A bass glockenspiel punches metronomically beneath a plethora of rattlings and rumblings. The sounds of thunder and birdsong bring the piece to an end. It is easy to make fun of this kind of music but there isn't even a coherent sense of colouristic atmosphere here, just a sort of unco-ordinated meandering. "Bhutan" represents a slightly different strain with drum machine and DX7 jerking out oriental patterns, but again there's no development or challenge. It's a pretty pattern for Montgomery to colour in.

"Spaces", at over ten minutes, offers the potential to become something more interesting. Indeed Harris's bass and Morgan's piano do make an adept and effective contribution shoring up and sluicing energy and atmosphere but Montgomery clacks about within their creation to no great effect. Hartis's playing is seldom less than thoughtful throughout and Matt Fretton's vocal versatility is admirably

Minnesquesque but they're not helped by their leader's muddled musical vision.

STEVE LEWIS

### ANDREW CYRILLE & JIMMY LYONS SOMETHING IN RETURN

(Black Saint 120 125-2)

Recorded: New York, 13 February 1981

*Take The A Train; Something In Return; Sorry, J.L.; Nada; Fragments I*

Jimmy Lyons (as), Andrew Cyrille (perc)

THIS DUO set receives a somewhat belated release, but where the late Jimmy Lyons is concerned, better late than never definitely applies, and we are again indebted to the extraordinarily productive Giovanni Bonandini for making available these tapes of a concert given at Soundscape, a performance space created by Verna Gillis in New York.

provisation around Strayhorn's famous theme, his razor-edged, acerbic tone cutting a piercing arc over Cyrille's scurrying percussion.

There is a strong feeling of listening to a genuinely unfocussed musical dialogue throughout the set, but it is most literally applied in the lengthy Cyrille piece "Something In Return", where saxophone and percussion answer each other in extended improvised statements, before eventually merging their voices in a furious ensemble climax.

Cyrille's powerful rhythmic flexibility and ear for percussive colouration is impressive throughout, but it is Lyons who really seizes the attention. He ranges from deft and melodic on "A Train" to strident and fearsome on "Sorry" (wrongly listed as "Lorry" on the sleeve) and "Fragments I", merging the dark, surging maelstrom of the avant-garde with a beautifully judged, emotionally expressive comment of melody and harmony. The saxophone is among the best of his generation, and his recordings away from Taylor's dominating influence deserve to be much better known.

KENNY MATHIESON

### GEORGE CRUMB

#### MAKROKOSMOS I & II

(Attaca, Babel 8528-3)

Recorded: Veenendaal, Netherlands, 9 and 10 December 1984.  
Robert Naswold (p).



Lyons and Cyrille were old partners from the Cecil Taylor Unit, where they developed the kind of mutual understanding which is so obvious on this record. Lyons is one of the great saxophone voices of the period, and remains undervalued by the listening public, largely as a consequence of devoting himself so self-effacingly to Cecil's music. Like John Gilmore, his devotion to his leader seemed to overshadow what could have been a more illustrious individual reputation.

The compensation, of course, is that he was a crucial participant in some of the most adventurous and uncompromising music of the last three decades, and the questing, inventive voice he nurtured in his tenure in the Taylor Unit is fully in evidence here. In the opening "Take The A Train", Lyons lays out a fragmented, allusive, but always melodic im-

"I THINK that for every composer there's a natural acoustic which he inherits," George Crumb, sound-colourist and mystic, traces the "echoing quality . . . haunting sounds" of his own music to the hills of his native West Virginia – to their "natural acoustic". This quaint belief in the acoustic power of place fits with the mystical backdrop to the current work – a *Makrokosmos* of sound-colour in two sets of "Twelve Fantasy Pieces after the Zodiac" for amplified piano.

The pieces date from 1972-3, and though comparisons with the earlier *Makrokosmos* by Bartok aren't direct, the influence of that composer's "night music" is clear. Another European sound-world – Messiaen's – is also in evidence. The two come together in an offbeat way in "Night Spell (Sagittarius)" where the whistling starts as (Messiaenic) bird-song and finishes like the theme from one of Bartok's

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adagio (Piano Concerto No 3). Whistling? That's right, the keyboard textures are enhanced by the wide range of vocalising the pianist is called upon to contribute – from the "plain-sung" "Agnus Dei (Capricorn)" to the whispering "Cosmic Wind (Libra)". The "Scorpio" of "The Phantom Gondolier" is Crumb himself apparently, and judging by the ghostly intoning and bawling in this piece he must be a jolly fellow indeed.

There's a lot of interior strumming, and some prepared-piano effects also on "Morning Music (Cancer)". The Zodiac programme behind the pieces is complicated by musical quotation too – Chopin's *Fantaisie Impromptu* weaves its way beautifully in and out of the ponderous, subdued and pianistically conventional sonorities of "Dream Images (Gemini)" for instance. It all adds up to an extraordinary exploration of the piano's total resources. Delicate, acute, precise, often slow-moving and apparently uneventful, the "Fantasy Pieces" make up more than the pleasant background you might take them for at first. Attentive listening reveals more than a Crumb of comfort in *Makrokosmos*.

ANDY HAMILTON

## THE LEADERS

### OUT HERE LIKE THIS . . .

(Black Saint 120 119-1)

Recorded: New York, 18/19 February 1987.

Zev, Lester; Cool T; Dooky Doit; Portraits; Felicia; Love I Owe Known.

Lester Bowie (t); Arthur Blythe (as); Chico Freeman (ts, ss, bc); Kirk Lightsey (pt); Cecil McBee (b); Don Moye (d, perc).

Lester slumps in. Familiar slurred daffy duck quackings. First thought: not *again*. Mind changed in 20 seconds. "Zero" keeps opening up. Free swirl to breezy Caribbean jaunt to reeling bebop. Moye drilling at the tide cymbal, Blythe blithe. A squeaking need in his first mouthful, then idea tossed off casually, sunny as you like. Lightsey bucking some private rhythm of jabs and stabs, up and down, up and down. Kirk's still jabbing oddly, like a one-armed Monk, on Chico's "Luna". Everybody else jerkily syncopated. It's a moonwalk with stroboscope, Freeman's renor probing craters. This one echoing massively, this one reflecting the sound straight back.

Lester's "Cool T" slinks up the alley, cat-agile, limber as McBee's walking bass and droll as Moye's devious snare accents (grenades

flipped over the shoulder). No idea what Lightsey was thinking when he called his piece "Donkey Dust". (What's that? A tranquilliser for angels?) Stately this one, with nice writing for the horns . . . which the horns unwind at their own pace. There's no hurry.

"Portraits" (by McBee) is by intention episodic. Imposing arco bass up front, tangled *pizzicato* as penultimate section. In between, a solo by Freeman that works all of the tenor's range, without straining for effect. Moye takes a log-rolling drum solo over a piano vamp. The piece finishes with Chico adding just a dab of bass clarinet to a theme that arrives, like the cavalry, just in time. Chico discreetly yodels between octaves, Coltrane-like.

Cecil's other piece recalls, in passing, the other Cecil. Lightsey is obliged to take a forearm to the keys in a free passage that comes



out of a straight reading of the blues. Then there's a heated conversational, as in talking, exchange:

"Why you say that?"

"Why you do me like that?"

"I don't understand."

And so on. The dialogue seems a witty comment on the "soundtrack" feel of many of these pieces. It says "produced" by Chico Freeman on the sleeve. It could as easily have said "directed".

STEVE LAKE

## JOHN COLTRANE

### LUSH LIFE

(Prestige PR7188)

Recorded: 16 August 1957.

*Lush Sorrow Is Love; I Love You; Trane's Slow Blues.*  
John Coltrane (ts); Earl May (b); Arthur Taylor (d).  
Recorded: 10 January 1958.

## LUSH LIFE

Donald Byrd (t); John Coltrane (ts), Red Garland (p); Paul Chambers (b), Louis Hayes (d).

Recorded: 31 May 1957.

*I Hear A Rhapsody.*

Omar Byrd; Al Heath replaces Hayes.

APART FROM the retitling from *Lush Sorrow Is Love* this issue is identical to the Transatlantic edition that I invested several weeks' pocket money in as a schoolkid on one of my forays into the old, dark, atmospheric HMV jazz basement. It is an album that still has all the magic that it had for me two decades ago.

It is probably difficult to credit today that even in 1967 (let alone 1957) Trane was regarded by many people as an incompetent or a charlatan, if not both. It was his very honesty, his habit of woodshedding in public, that was often used against him. This album shows him at a point at which most musicians would have been happy to entrench, nearing mastery of one style; Trane was already reaching further, his eye on other goals.

There is everything and nothing to say about Trane's playing here. Side one has him for the first time backed by bass (Earl May) and drums (Arthur Taylor) only. Notewriter Joe Goldberg tells how he asked Trane a number of questions about this situation and its implications for the tenor's art; "the answer was immediate and succinct: 'The piano player didn't show up.'" A lesson for all us critics. In any event, Coltrane made the best of things. "Like Someone" is render and beautiful, the tone still quite full but with episodes of the harder, crying sound that was to come later. "I Love You" has a goodly share of the sheets of sound but retains a lyrical feel, while "Trane's Slow Blues" is a superb gospelly line which the tenor immediately sets about kneading into equally impressive new shapes. Despite May's rich and resonant contribution there are a few points where you might miss the harmonic flatness a pianist would have provided, but overall this is a fascinating session.

Side two has Donald Byrd and a full rhythm section on the title track and a standard quartet on "I Hear A Rhapsody". "Lush Life" is more conventional ballad playing, lightning arpeggios notwithstanding, while "Rhapsody" takes the album out on a rough note. Trane had already committed better music to vinyl and would do better still, but this album is well worth having in your collection.

HARRY WITHERDEN

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**ROBERT WATSON QUARTET****LOVE REMAINS**

(Red 123212)

Recorded: New York City, 13 November 1986

*The Mystery Of Ebbop; Love Remains; Blues For Alto, Ode For Aaron, Dark Days (Against Apartheid), Sho Thang, The Love We Had Yesterday*

Robert Watson (ts), John Hicks (p), Curtis Lundy (b), Marvin "Smitty" Smith (d).

**HOPPE** ALWAYS springs, but I don't anticipate hearing a better jazz album this twelvemonth. Marked, perhaps, by the shift from "Bobby" to the more buttoned-down Robert, saxophonist Watson has grown enormously in stature since *Roam Trip*, his last outing for Red. The raw ingredients have been combined into something of real substance (an achievement in which the three top-drawer sidemen — and Pamela Watson as co-writer — deserve equal praise).

The faster tracks, Curtis Lundy's staccato theme "Sho Thang", "The Mystery Of Ebbop", "Ode For Aaron" and a fibrous "Blues For Alto", demonstrate the measure by which Watson's technique has developed. He fires off notes in tight clusters, super accurate, and invests every one of them with a convincing emotional freight. It would be wrong to draw a sharp distinction between "technique" and "expression", but for the fact that "Love Remains", "Dark Days" and "The Love We Had Yesterday" concentrate so largely on coloration rather than on the pace and complexity of attack. They're none the less technically excellent for that, and help underline what seems to me Watson's palpable kinship with the wonderful Marion Brown.

The title piece unwinds a little three-note melody that absolutely unambiguous in its import and requires no subtlety. It's matched for sheer beauty only by the haunting "Dark Days (Against Apartheid)", a beautifully syncopated lament punctuated with mysterious blips from (I assume) an electric keyboard.

"Ode For Aaron" is simple, lyrical bop, exactly the kind of unfussy jazz writing that exposes duff chops. Lundy and "Smitty" are as always superb and John Hicks, a less exposed talent (unless I've been missing his credits), is excellent.

It's particularly good to have an album that gives off signs that it was conceived as such, rather than just emerging as a procession of takes. There's a perfect emotional logic to the

seven pieces and no sense at the close of either unfulfilled promise or surfeit.

BRIAN MORTON

**SHIRLEY SCOTT AND STANLEY TURRENTINE****BLUE FLAMES**

(Prestige PR7338)

Recorded: New York, September 1964.

*The Funky Fox, Hip Knees An' Legs; Five Spot After Dark, Grand Street, Flamingo*.

Shirley Scott (org); Stanley Turrentine (ts), Bob Cranshaw (b), Otis Finch (d).

**ROLAND KIRK****KIRK'S WORK**

(Prestige PR7210)

Recorded: New York, 1961.

*Three For Dizzy, Makin' Whoopee, Funk Underneath, Kirk's Work, Don't Be Sixty-Eight, Too Late Now, Skater's Waltz*.

Roland Kirk (ts, manzello, strich, fl, siren); Jack McDuff (org); Joe Benjamin (b); Arthur Taylor (d).

THE HAMMOND organ has never rid itself of the controversy it caused when Jimmy Smith introduced it to jazz in the late 50s. Like many technological innovations (compare the way sampling has recycled 70s funk) it created a loop in time, allowing small clubs access to the across-the-board surge of a swing orchestra. No accident that Basieite Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis found a new lease of life with the tenor-organ format, and his finest hour was in partnership with Shirley Scott. Religious segregation meant that America was never so racially divided as when it knelt to pray: to emphasize blackness you referred to church. This was another important meaning of the organ sound in the 60s, a period of escalating black consciousness.

Stanley Turrentine succeeded Lockjaw Davis

as tenor to Scott's organ. Amusingly, since Turrentine's most recent claim to fame is as soloist on Will Downing's hit cover of "A Love Supreme", the sleeve notes (both reissues sport original packaging) stress his independence from Trane's influence. Cleaner and more modern than Lockjaw, lacking the latter's uporous drive, he is no Trane copyist either, tracing his own sparse, soulful narratives. On Earl Boozie's hit "Flamango" he is cool and reflective, nothing garish or wasted — tailgate tremors here at wells of feeling. Bob Cranshaw's buoyant bass saves the rhythm from Otis Finch's driving but relentless ride cymbal.

Shirley Scott is superb, better than a lot of the over-recorded Jimmy Smith. Her comping is warm and supportive, set off by squealing, liquid forays from her right hand. On "Hip Knees An' Legs" her solo is shimmering and funky, the blues stabbing and nasty. The envelope of sound emitted by an organ note swirls like breath over a flute's aperture: Scott's unique setting of the stops milks this effect, making it vital. Sonny Rollins' "Grand Street" features a solo that gradually accumulates excitement, a colossal piling of notes. The figures are well nigh palpable, as if someone is pressing out the notes on your skin. Scott drenches the music in the blues: the fact that Turrentine can improvise so eloquently gives the lie to those who damn all organ music as grit-in-gravy coarseness.

Jack McDuff is a more conventional organist, using the classic stops, but *Kirk's Work* is still a solid example of the genre. McDuff favours big chords — which on the Hammond have a nearly physical impact, like inhaling smoke — finds that blue note and *stressifies* (the word is Johnny "Guitar" Watson's) (*of course* — until the music screams). Taylor is a joy: loose and swinging, a no-quits pulse opened up with dramatic percussive accents. The organ blasts make Kirk's notorious multi-blowing redundant, but his stately, level-headed balladry on tenor ("Too Late Now") and his pressured, bulbous strich ("Skater's Waltz") are beautiful. "Funk Underneath" is a tour-de-force for Kirk, the bluest jazz flute this side of Dolphy.

I suppose if your idea of a good time is to rise above the mere body, these records are not for you — but for us funkifying materialists they constitute a ball.

BEN WATSON

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## FAST LICKS

**AHMED ABDULLAH QUARTET: LIQUID MAGIC** (*Silkheart SHLP-104*). Abdullah has good technique and a tone you could toast bread on. His cohorts – Mal Favors, Charles Brackeen, Alvin Fielder – are enormously capable and experienced. The first side makes some fashionable obeisances to African sources but side two, beginning with a Sun Ra number, is where things really begin to happen. From here it blazes with the vigour and sense of self-surprise that marked those who followed Ornette into wonderland in the early 1960s. The most strong resonance is with the old Bill Dixon–Archie Shepp Quartet from their 1962 Savoy days. That in itself can't be bad and simply the fact that these guys can reproduce that kind of enthusiasm at this late date has to be a source of wonder in itself. It's like getting good news of someone you never expected to hear about again.

JACK COOK

**CLEO BROWN: BOOGIE WOOGIE** (*Official 3010*). This would appear to be the definitive collection of songs by singer/pianist Cleo Brown, sweetheart of the 30s and 40s radio and of Chicago clubland, and catalyst for a string of female singer/pianists at that time. It contains her most noted hits, among them "(Pinetop's) Boogie Woogie", rendered in ferocious style, and "You're A Heavenly Thing" (featuring a young Gene Krupa and bassist Artie Bernstein). Though her blistering "Boogie Woogie" is undoubtedly the high-point, the album also illustrates her talents as bandleader and accompanist in all four of the separate recording sessions presented here. With her exuberant style and sweet, infectious voice, the evidence is of a great entertainer in her prime. It's a shame that the recording quality deteriorates so rapidly through side two that some of her best numbers are barely audible.

VERONICA LYONS

**KAZUMI WATANABE: THE SPIRE OF LIFE TOO** (*Gramavision 18-8810-1*). A second helping from this quartet – the guitarist-leader and keyboardman Peter Verstege put down the technoflash solos while Jeff Berlin and Bill Bruford lay the big electric rhythms alongside. I'm partial to Watanabe's clean, hard-bitten

solo, but like so much recent jazz-rock the technique has become too commonplace, the thrills second-hand. Bruford's tunes "Small Wonder" and "Men And Angels" suggest a more interesting palette than the usual sonic bombardment. I bet this is a strong live band: isn't it time Watanabe played in Europe?

MIKE FINN

**BERLINER SAXOPHON QUARTETT: SAXOPHONQUARTETTE** (*Subway VMS 10/66*). The classical repertoire for saxophone quartet is small and relatively conservative, although recent exceptions like Nicola LeFanu's "Moon Over The Western Ridge, Moortwingee" may be changing the rule. The surprise about this LP is that the Berliner Saxophon Quartett have unearthed several charming pieces from the early 1900s. Alexander Glazunov's quartet on



side one moves with a light, romantic swing through discreet references to everyone from Bach to Wagner, but it's side two which has the real treats – Moussier's mostly contrapuntal "Andante, Fugue And Finale", Bumcke's "Two Quartets" (featuring the black velvet tones of an alto, tenor, baritone and bass line-up) and Francais's "Petit Quatuor", with its lilting *cantilena* and comically fragmented finale. Delightful tunes, delicate textures, disciplined forms: these tracks are perfect miniatures of the composerly art. Recommended.

GRAHAM LOCK

**VARIOUS ARTISTS: MUSIC FOR FILMS III** (*Land 04*). Real or imagined? Probably the latter: if these 13 sound sketches (15 on the CD) were, indeed, commissioned soundtracks,

then the sleeve credits make little of their origins. But the concept is not that important. What you get is a carefully sequenced collection of ambient miniatures culled from both stage and studio – off-the-peg atmospherics and frosted images from the Eno clan. Brian's *Dinner Music* and *Thursday Afternoon* provide important reference points; so too does Jon Hassell's Fourth World concept of melding Eastern traditional musics with the hi-tech resolution of the Western avant-garde (the disappointment is that Hassell himself is not featured). Michael Brook's ethereal sketches for "infinite" guitar and tape provide a worthy substitute; so too does Larraji's treated continuums of vocal and zither-playing. I would certainly have liked more of Harold Budd's icy keyboard insignias, snake-like melodies carving out a groove like a glacier ploughing its way through rock; rather less of John Paul Jones' "Four Minute Warning" with its bare-faced robbery of Terry Riley's "Poppy Nogood".

DAVID ILIC

**JOSHUA BREAKSTONE: EVENING STAR** (*Contemporary C-14040*). Breakstone sounds like a scholarly bore in his sleeplessness. The music is a little more characterful. The guitarist leads a quintet with Jimmy Knepper on trombone and Tommy Flanagan on piano for a session which is sensible but sometimes interestingly askew. Though the leader tends to solo with exaggerated care, there's a nice lift to his playing, and it matches well with Knepper's crusier, more swinging solos. Flanagan comps as perceptively as ever.

RICHARD COOK

**JOHANNES CERNITA: SPARTA** (*Jaro 4136*). An album of solo piano compositions; no improvisation as far as I can tell. Cernota is a German pianist, composer and painter. On side one he plays his own suite *Sparta*, on side two pieces by Satie (a major influence, he claims). Corea and Part. *Sparta* was directly inspired by Satie's *Gymnopédies*, but its austere, often rhythmic tonal idiom seems more indebted to Bartók. It's OK. The Chick Corea pieces are from his *Children's Songs*, a kind of grown-up *Kinderzorn*. Arvo Part's brief but beautiful "For Alena" is a first recording. But most fun is Satie's "D'Ednophotalma", a satire on clichéistic finales.

ANDY HAMILTON

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i s s u e s

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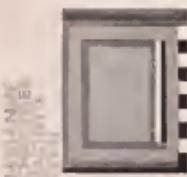


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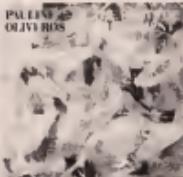
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## IN THE BEGINNING

AFTER Composers: 12 Tones That Shook The World, wouldn't it be a good idea to chart the history of *improvised* music, or the development of the "Jazz Avant-Garde"? For those of us who, like me, are relatively new to this music (too young, or whatever), it would be a great help to get the roles of, say, John Coltrane, Cecil Taylor, Ornette Coleman and the like into some kind of perspective.

I personally found the aforementioned article very helpful, and I too (like Mr Parfitt, *Wire* 55) would like to see more in print about the composers of modern music. However, having said this, my interests lie in improvised music, so (to quote Mr Parfitt) how about giving your "whacked-out improvisers" an even bigger break?

J. FLETCHER, East Croydon

WHAT DID YOU SAY  
THAT WAS?

I'M INCLINED to agree with Philip Watson's review of Mike Brecker's new platter (*Wire* 57). Brecker's so completely on it that it starts to get boring. But his song titles, that's another matter altogether. It's time *Wire* did a poll on who's coming up with the best names for tunes. After all, there's a great jazz tradition of picking loony titles which have no relevance to what's being played.

Think of Louis Armstrong's "Muggles", or Johnny Hodges' "Squatty Roo", or Roland Kirk's "Ebraugs". Those are the nonsense ones, but there's a new dry wit to go with the new, dry, supercool jazz of the 80s. Brecker ("Every-

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thing Happens When You're Gone") is a master at it, but the real man to beat in this category must be John Scofield ("The Beatles", "Dance Me Home", "Pick Hits"). And now comes the revelation that his wife chooses all the titles for him!

We demand a poll for the best jazz song title of '88. Never mind all that "Best Instrumentalist" stuff! Give us what we really want!

IAN MCTAVISH, Aldershot

## FISH FRIED

MIKE FISH'S review of the recent *Dance Juice* and *Acid Jazz* compilations was so typical of *Wire's* treatment of the Jazz Dance Scene. It is surely no coincidence that the fortunes of your magazine have grown alongside this scene, yet you have largely ignored or at best snidely patronised this development.

Fish typified this attitude with his pathetic inability to come to terms with the thought that so-called "second line" players have made

music of contemporary interest (and quality). It was clearly beyond his mental capabilities to situate these LPs in the context of Jazz Dance. The music of Funk Inc, Willis Jackson and Gene Ammons has been getting people into clubs and live venues, on to dancefloors and, above all, listening to jazz music as a social event. The brand of "new music" *Wire*, and presumably Fish also, would have us listening to it as music for introspectives, to be consumed in isolation, music of intellectual (sic) appreciation alone.

In the last few years there has been a heavy duty increase in the number of jazz records issued, jazz clubs opening and people playing the music. Also many a talented musician, long since confined to obscurity by you jazz introspectives, has been given a new lease of life through the Jazz Dance Scene with re-issued albums and live performances. The *Dance/Jazz/Acid/Juice* compilations are an integral part of this. *Wire* up *Wire*.

GRAHAM CRAIG, London NW

*Mike Fish replies:* Be wise yourself, Mr Craig. I was unaware that I had to review the LPs in the context of Jazz Dance. I'm afraid that I reviewed them on the basis of whether they included good music or not. I was also under the impression that as "jazz introspective" (and yes, I like Gene Ammons too – do you know: The Soulful Moods Of Gene Ammons, *Grabs*?) were trying to bring *your* attention, rather than obscurity, to many a talented musician. I'm not sure what you think I would have you listening to instead. I suspect, in fact, that we're both on the same side.



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